

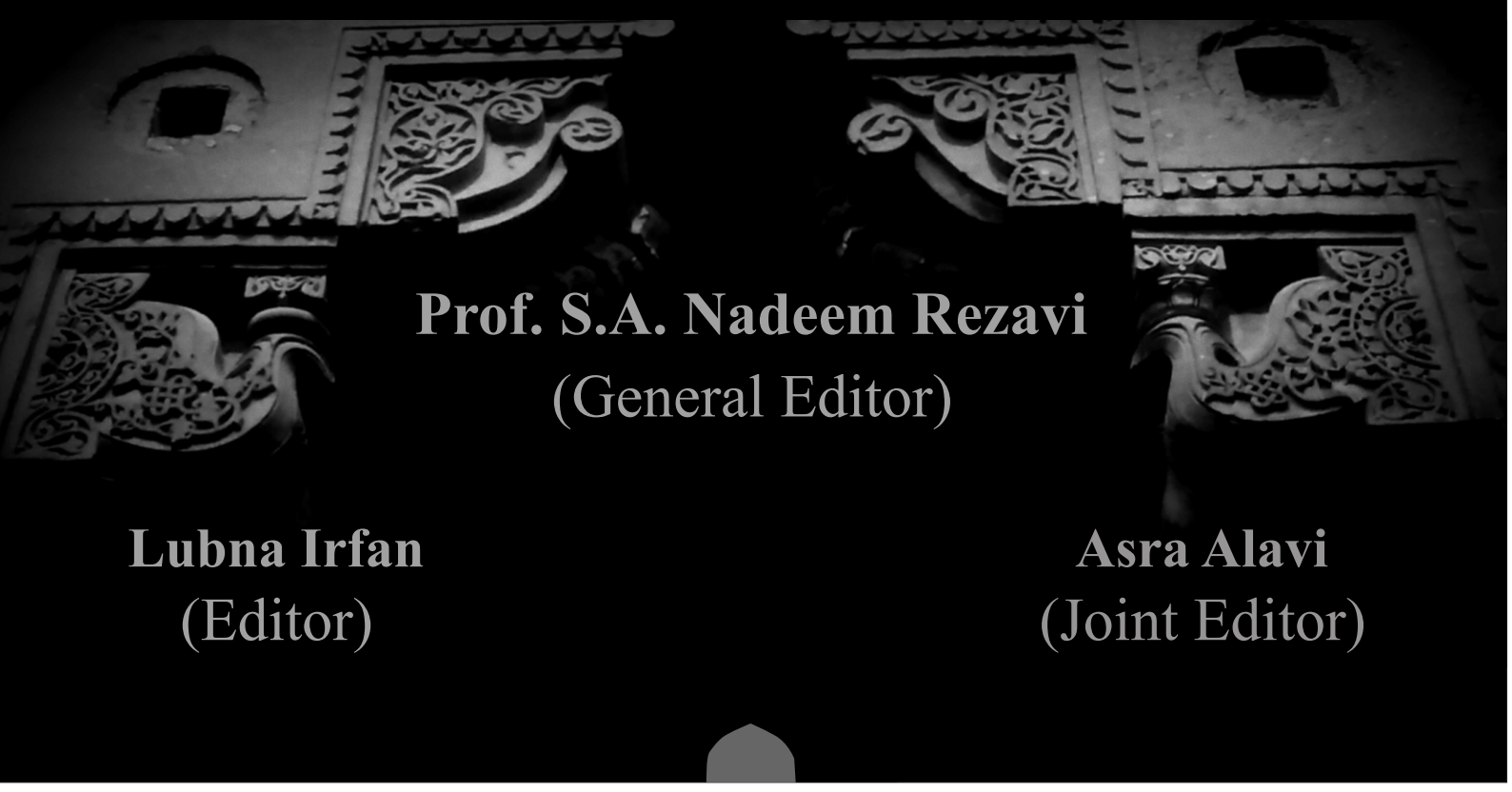


Bulletin of Sultania Historical Society (BOSHS)

A Quarterly Journal

Vol. I Issue: 03

July-September 2017



Prof. S.A. Nadeem Rezavi
(General Editor)

Lubna Irfan
(Editor)

Asra Alavi
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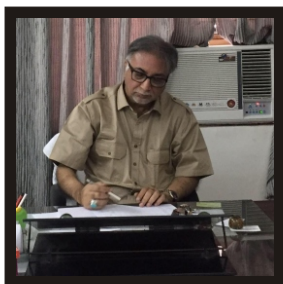
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From the General Editor's Desk

As we bring out the second issue of the Bulletin, we are in the midst of celebrating the Bicentennial year of our founder, the great Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. I congratulate each and every member of our Alma Mater on this auspicious occasion. I further hope that all of us unite to take forward the mission started by him.

Since the issuance of numbers 1-2 of the Bulletin, the Department and its members as well as the Sultania Historical Society have held a series of lectures and seminars. Professor Mridula Mukherjee and Professor Aditya Mukherjee, both from JNU, delivered a lecture each. Dr Anirudh Deshpande (DU) also visited us and delivered a series of lectures. Another important visitor to the Department was Prof. Yasmeen Saikia, from University of Arizona, USA, she is also our alumnus. She delivered an inspiring lecture for the students. We also benefitted from the lectures of stalwarts like Professor Irfan Habib, the Professor Emeritus and the doyen of history. Apart from these the Society also organised a lecture of Professor Mohammad Sajjad. We plan to reproduce some of these lectures and talks in our subsequent issues of the Bulletin. Apart from carrying forward this task of organizing lectures and seminars in the coming months the Society is planning to organize a heritage walk of the historical campus of Aligarh Muslim University.

I take this opportunity to thank our very dedicated Research Scholar Editor, Ms Lubna Irfan and her team of enthusiastic researchers and students who made the publication of this issue possible. From this issue we are also associating an MA student, Ms. Asra Alvi as the Joint Editor of the Bulletin. She has otherwise also been active in organising the weekly seminars of the Society.

We have also decided to include some already published but relevant papers and articles of our stalwarts. A few are being issued in this volume, others will be included subsequently. We have also included a small but very relevant paper of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan himself.

I wish the students all success in their forthcoming exams and hope that they will remain as active as they have been in taking this Department forward: for remember, the Departments exist for them, and it is they who make the Departments proud!

(Professor Syed Ali Nadeem Rezavi)

Chairman & Coordinator

CAS, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh

Editor's Comment

The second issue of Bulletin of Sultania Historical Society (BOSHS) has been designed to bring forth and celebrate the founder of Aligarh Muslim University, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. While he has been much celebrated and worked upon as a reformer and a thinker, still his path breaking work as an academician needs to be further highlighted and discussed. This issue tries to work on precisely this aspect. Sir Syed was an active historian, archaeologist and a historical researcher before turning his energies to the reformation of the community. The scientific outlook with which he treads the path of Muslim community's reform might have been a result of his rational and scientific historical research.

This issue brings together important scholarship on the theme of Sir Syed as a Historian. An article by Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui on the topic 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing' is produced, further another article by Nazir Ahmad 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Work on Archaeology Entitled *Athar-us-Sanadid: A Study*' has been summarised for the purpose of this issue of the journal.

As a part of the bicentenary celebrations of Sir Syed's Birth Anniversary at the Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, AMU, a number of student seminars were conducted. These not only gave space to the younger minds of the field to better understand their founding father but also led to interesting and thought provoking discussions. I also read a paper on the topic 'Identifying the Historical Archaeologist in Sir Syed', which has also been published in this journal.

Apart from the publication of these academic papers, it has been attempted to give a complete overview of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's work and personality as a historian, and for that purpose, a paper written by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan himself on the topic 'On the bricks Employed in Building in Different Ages in India', has also been reproduced. And finally to give a better perspective on the motivations, reasons and actions of one of the most important thinkers of the 19th century India, the journal has attempted to provide two varied opinions on Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, one of Jawaharlal Nehru, by publishing an abstract from his *The Discovery of India* and the other of Rajmohan Gandhi, whose work *Understanding the Muslim Mind* has been reviewed by an M.A. (Previous) student, Ms. S. Zainab Naqvi for the journal.

In addition to these articles, the journal also provides a peek into the various activities of the Department of History and thus a report and photographs of the celebrations that took place to commemorate the bicentenary birth anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan have also been reproduced. And finally the official obituary from the Department, of beloved Prof. Satish Chandra has also been published.

This journal is not just an attempt at reviving the academic and intellectual excellence of the Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, AMU, but is also an endeavor to weave in students, researchers and academicians from varying areas of expertise and motivations for the production of knowledge that would benefit many. Before closing my remarks, I would just like to express my huge amount of gratitude to Ms. Asra Alavi, who has laboured very hard to bring this journal to its present form. Gratitude is also due to other students from the Department namely, Ms. S. Zainab Naqvi and Mr. Mohd Asif, for putting in their bits for this issue. I, also am grateful to people who have always managed to show up on every Saturday for the Student Seminars. We look forward to more such engagements.

-Lubna Irfan
Research Scholar
Centre of Advanced Study
Department of History, AMU

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Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Approach to History and History Writing*

-Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a man of many parts; a writer whose writings helped Urdu language become a vehicle for articulating new conceptions of morality, religion, philosophy and culture, a religious thinker, a social reformer, a scholar of comparative religion and also a historian who added new dimensions the conventional Muslim Historiography in South Asia. He wrote on the life of prophet of Islam and the Muslim rule in India both in Persian and Urdu. With the publications of books on history, religious and secular themes, Urdu language become capable of catering to the needs of the emerging Urdu speaking intelligentsia during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In fact, he liberated Urdu prose from the shackles of artificiality and made it flow with ease. This paper seeks to analyze the significance of the contribution of Sir Syed made to historical literature and also have an argument on the views held by him about the study of history and the methodology he employed in writing it.

To begin with, the first work on Indian history composed by Sir Syed in Persian in 1840 is the *Jam-i-Jam*.¹ It contains, besides an introduction, the historical tables, concerning the names of the fathers and mothers of the different Kings of Delhi, the dates of the birth of each one, his accession to the throne, duration of each kings' reign and the place where the ruler ascended the throne from Amir Timur onwards. Timur is reported to have stayed in Delhi for fifteen days. Mention is made by the author of the mothers of certain kings as well as the date of birth of Sher Shah Sur (reigned 1535-1545 A.D.) tends to suggest that our author had access to those sources of information that are not extant today. Sir Syed is the first historian who mentions Sher Shah's date of birth as 1472 A.D. and that of his first accession as 939 A.H. (1533) on the border of Bengal and then his second accession as 948 A.H. (1540-41 A.D.) after he had driven away the emperor Humayun from India. It is worth recalling that recently modern scholars Medieval Indian History began to question the establish fact regarding Sher Shah's accession to

the throne with the royal title in 1540 after his final victory over Humayun on account of the discovery of coins issued by Sher Shah since 1535 A.D.² Perhaps, Sir Syed had access to Sher Shah's coins and he was the first scholar to make use of numismatic evidence in the reconstruction of past history. The chronograms explaining the date of accession of each kings to the throne as well as the coins their metallurgy further enhance the historical value of the work. It is, indeed, a work of pioneer importance in that an attempt has been made in the history of history writing in India to provide a chronological framework for the benefit of coming generations; chronology helps the historian in having a correct perception of the elements of change and continuity in the history of a society.³

The introduction of *Jam-i-Jam* is also important in that we are provided with the first-hand information about the family background of the author and the association of his ancestors with the Mughal court since the arrival of his ancestor, Sharafu'ddin during Emperor Akbar's reign(1556-1605 A.D.)⁴ it also contains the praise of Mr. Hamilton under whom Sir Syed worked at Fathepur Sikri and this suggests that by the time he had become conversant with the Western methodology and the need of providing a chronological framework for a proper understanding of the past.

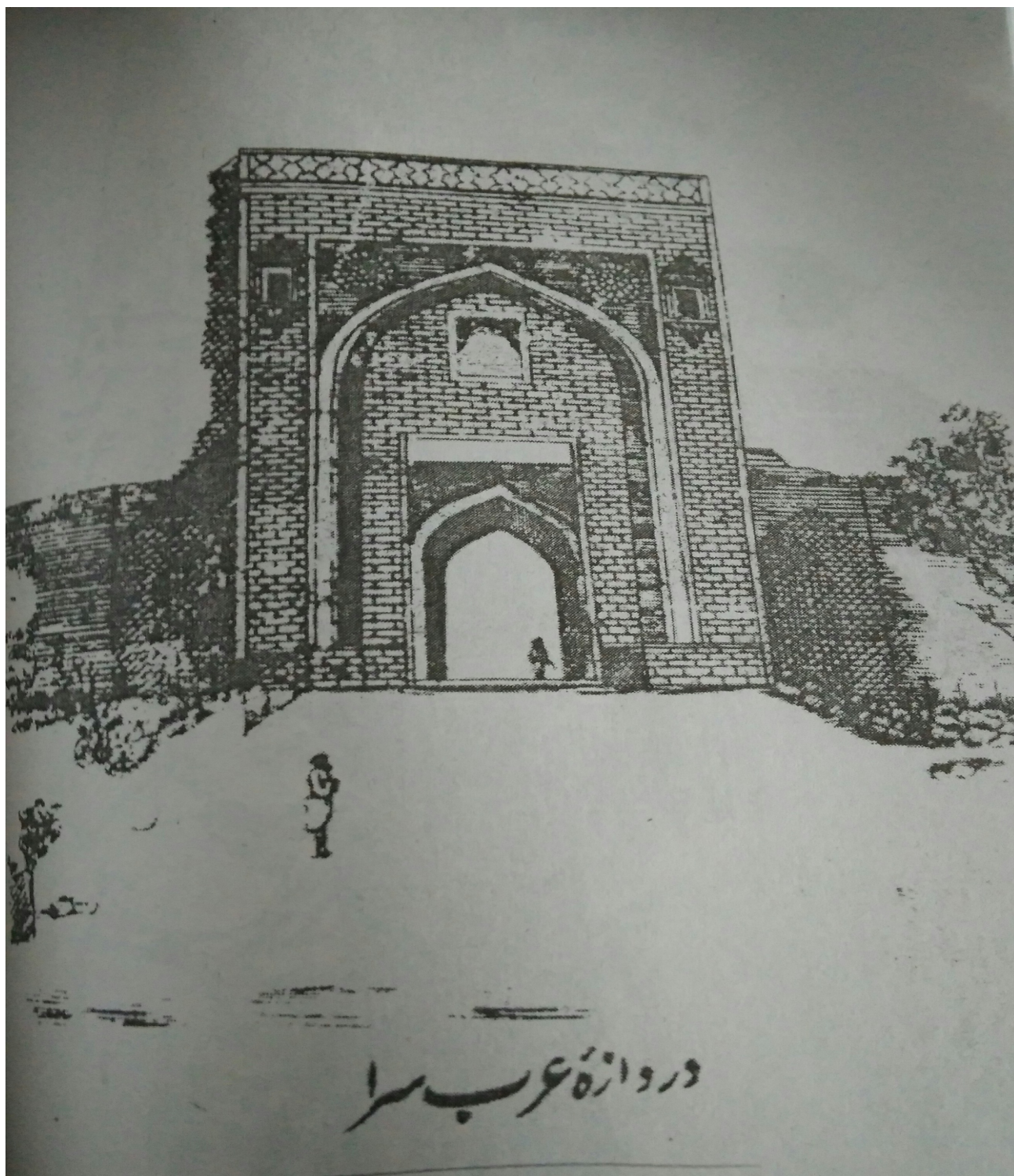
In 1842, Sir Syed compiled in Urdu the biography of the Prophet of Islam(PBUH), entitled *Jila ul-Qulub be zikr al- Mahbub*. It is in an interesting study because in this work his approach to Islamic history makes no departure from that he followed in compiling the *Jam-i-Jam* (discussed above). In its preparation Sir Syed drew largely on the *Madarij al Nubava*, compiled by sixteenth century religious scholar, Shaikh Abdal Haque Muhaddith Dehlvi. Like the early Muslim scholars, he did not think it proper on the part of a devout follower of the Prophet to question the authenticity of the evidence

1 Syed Ahmad Khan, *Jam-i-Jam*, Akbarabad, 1840

2 C.f. Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, *Sher Shah and His Dynasty*, second revised edition, Jaipur, 1995 Pp. 5-11

3 Saiyyid Ahmad Khan, (hereafter mentioned Sir Syed) *Jam-i-Jam*. Akbarabad. 1840. Pp. 141-23a.

4 *Ibid*. Pp 13a-b



Sketch of the Gate of Arab Sarai from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

concerning the miraculous powers possessed by the Prophet. Later on, when he adopted the critical method to test the authenticity of historical evidence he became critical of his own early work. By 1870 his approach to Islamic history also underwent an important change: from merely conventional it became scientific. His work 'Essays on the Life of

Mohammad (1870) in English and as *Khudabat-I Ahamadiya* (1870) in Urdu is based on scientifically analyzed evidence culled from the standard sources of the information. In its preparation he consulted manuscript sources available in the British Museum and in the India Office Library in London, and also utilized Arabic works on the *Sira*, published in the

Arab countries as well as rare Latin Commentaries. Though the work was basically written to refute Sir William Muir's polemical work, 'Life of Mahomet' (1858), it is characterized by profound scholarship on the part of its author. Upon its publication the work received praise and support from western scholar and influenced the Orientalists like John Davenport, Garcin de Tassy, and Sir Thomas Arnold.⁵ Conscious of this change in his approach to Islamic History Sir Syed wrote in 1883 that he had incorporated in his *Jila-al-Qulub be Zikr-al-Mahbub* many legends on the basis of *Madarij -al-Nubava* "that cannot stand the test of historical scrutiny".⁶ It is worth remarking that in his works written in Urdu on historical themes related to India he had already started employing westernized methodology since 1846 A.D. the year when the first edition of his *magnum opus Asar-ul-Sanadid* was brought out in print. This Urdu work was epoch making, adding a new dimension to traditional Indo-Muslim historiography, produced during medieval times. A careful study of this work shows that Sir Syed had become conscious of the importance of surface archaeology as a source of information on the life and culture of the past as well as the role of the city in transforming the culture and traditions of its resident. Being a Delhiwala, he could take pride in describing its past glory but without nostalgia. He realized that like peoples, the great cities develop their own culture and social traditions over the years. That the transforming impact of the metropolitan city of Delhi on the life, language and culture of people not only in the area around by also in the vast region under the rule of its rulers was of immense significance. According to him the fate of a civilization is ultimately reflected in the fate of its great cities. To Sir Syed, Delhi which had been the seat of great imperial dynasties from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the decline of the Mughal power in the eighteenth century had had a fascinating history. Therefore, he attempted a scientific study of the rulers, the ethnic groups they belonged to, and the surviving monuments of medieval Delhi along with the contemporary leading scholars, religious divines and those who had gained fame as men of eminence in different arts and crafts since the later half of the eighteenth century in order to provide insights into Delhi's culture that could not otherwise be obtained. The fortresses, palaces, pleasure gardens and the water reservoirs added considerably to the grandeur of Delhi. This grandeur

also created a market sense of pride in Delhi's residents from the early medieval period down to the author's own time. Isami, the fourteenth-century poet and the compiler of the *Futuh-u's-Salatin*, looked down upon the residents of towns and cities even in the neighborhood of Delhi and considered them rustics, not worthy of residing in Delhi.⁷ The famous eighteenth century Urdu poet, Mir Taqi Mir, betrays the same feeling in his autobiographical work, *zikh-i-Mir*; and over and over again in his *ghazals*.⁸ With the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and the establishment of British authority, the development of Indo-Muslim architecture came to end. Even future of important buildings became dark lending a sense of urgency to the task of compiling a description of Delhi's monuments so that their memory could be cherished. Mention may be made here of Sangin Beg, son of Ali Akbar Beg, who seems to have been the first scholar to undertake the preparation of a work on the buildings of historical significance in Shahjahan's Delhi (or Shahjahanabad). Sometime after 1819 A.D., Sangin Beg produced a book in Persian entitled '*Sair-ul-Manazil*'. Sir Syed was perhaps inspired by Sangin Beg to produce in Urdu a comprehensive work, the *Asar-ul Sanadid*, describing the buildings in Shahjahanabad and the area around that contained ruins and traces of the old cities founded by different rulers since Delhi's conquest by Qutbuddin Aibek in 1193 A.D. even though written in ornate and rhymed prose, *Asar-ul Sanadid* was thought to be an outstanding work on the history of Delhi's monuments even by the European Scholars. They considered it pioneering authoritative work on the development of Indo Muslim architectural styles in Delhi. In fact, Sir Syed did hard work in preparing it. To decipher the inscriptions Sir Syed raised himself to the top of Qutub Minar in a stringed contraption, although he was a hefty man. Besides the first three parts relating to the history of Delhi, its monuments, inscription etc., its fourth part is also a very important as it provides us with balanced account of the *Mashaikh*, the scholars, the artists and the poets from the pen of a historian who successfully tried to remain non-partisan in his approach to historical personage during earlier as well as in his own time. His account of certain dignitaries who performed the combined role of a Sufi Shaikh and scholar reveals the Islamic influences still bounced back from Delhi to the Muslim countries as far as Central Asian lands,

5 Cf. Aziz Ahmed, *Islamic Modernization in India and Pakistan*, (O.U.P., London) 1967 Pp, 39-40.

6 Sir Syed, Review, *Tasanif-i Ahmadiya*, Aligarh, 1883, p.2.

7 Isami, *Futuh-u's-Salatin* ed. A.S. Usha. Madras, 1984, p.450.

8 Cf. K.A. Nizami, *Delhi Tarikh ke Aina-mein*, Urdu, Delhi,,1989, Pp.90-91, for details.



Sketch of the Iron Pillar from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

Middle East and African continent.

Writing about Maulana Shah Ghulam Ali, the spiritual successor of *Jan-i-Jahan* Mazhar and representative of the Mujaddidiya branch of the Naqshbandi order, he writes: “the entire world benefited spiritually from compassion-radiating personality of his holiness. People came from different countries and entered the circle of his *murids*. I saw in his *Khanqah* (hospice) with my own eyes people from Rum (i.e. the Ottoman Empire), Syria, Baghdad, Egypt, China, and Habash (Africa). They paid visit to him and became his disciple. They rendered service to people in his *Khanqah*, considering it the very source of their salvation. As regards the visitors from the cities of Hindustan (i.e. eastern provinces), the Punjab and Afghanistan, they came in masses to receive his blessings. Then he (Sir Syed) says about the permanent residents of the *Khanqah* who had denounced worldly comfort that their number was never less than five hundred. He met their needs with the sale proceeds of gifts (*Futuh*) that were presented to him by rich visitors. He put on coarse clothes which he provided to others in his *Khanqah*, the same was the case with the food that he or his guests took daily.

Being an exemplar of piety he combined spirituality with his social activism. He strictly followed his daily routine. A *hafiz* (one who commits the whole Quran to memory) and an expert *qari* (one who recites the Quran), first he would offer his early dawn prayer and then recite ten *paras* (parts) of the Quran. Therefore, he spent time with his *murids* in performing meditation till the time of *Ishraq* (prayer after sun rise). He delivered lectures and held discussions on the subtle points of *hadith* and *tasrif* (exegesis of the Quran). His lectures helped in the internal transformation of all those who came to listen him. Again, he delivered lectures on *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and the books on *tussawwuf* (Islamic mysticism) after he had taken lunch, siesta and offered the afternoon prayer (*zuhar* prayer). In short, he was an erudite scholar not of traditional Islamic sciences alone; he had gained perfection in esoteric science also. His senior *murids* spent their time in his company between *Asr* (later afternoon prayer) and *Maghrib* (After sunset) prayers and benefited from his attention and attained to high spiritual station.⁹

9 *Asar-ul-Sanadid*, Ed. Khaliq Anjum, Urdu Academy, Delhi, 1990, Pp.15-21.

One may think that the author glorifies Shah Ghulam Ali because his own father, Sayyid Muhammad Muttaqui, was included among his *murids*. It is not so because the spiritual achievements and social role of Shah Fakhruddin, the leading *Chisti* Sufi, has also been described with the same fervor. It is generally known that Naqshbandi *silsilah* stood for strict adherence to *Sharia* and even a slight deviation from the Prophetic tradition was unacceptable. Conversely, the Chisti Sufis had adopted certain spiritual exercises, such as breath-control and *sama'* (Sufi song with music). But Sir Syed, avoiding all polemical discussions, highlights the spiritual charisma and high moral qualities possessed and popularity enjoyed by Shah Fakhruddin among the members of ruling *elite* and the commoners alike. In preparing his account our author not only utilized the contemporary literature, including the works written by Shah Fakhruddin, but also seems to have collected information from his senior disciples who survived their Pir. The biographical details furnished by the author about his son, grandson and *Khalifas* are also from any bias.¹⁰ None has ever been able to point out any element of subjectivity in his approach to the history of the sufis and scholars, belonging to different schools of religious thought. Even the ecstatic sufis are described as they were found by him.¹¹

Similarly, none of the leading *ulama* has been described differently. If Shah Ismail Shahid is praised for his devotion to the cause of Islam and his role in the *jihād* movement launched by Sayyid Ahmed Bareilvi, the portrayal of Maulana Fazl-i-Haque's Arabic *Qasidas* are quoted to show his command over the Arabic language: Al this is free both from exaggeration or bias id any kind.

In 1846, Sir Syed got himself transferred from Fatehpur Sikri to Delhi after the passage away of his elder brother, Sayyid Muhammad Khan. By this time he had endeared himself to the English officers posted in Delhi, his *Asar-ul-Sanadid* had won recognition as an important contribution to historical literature on Delhi. Arthur A. Roberts, the District Magistrate and collector of Delhi, took it London and presented it there to Colonel Saxon, the member

both of the Royal Asiatic Society of Britain and the Board of Directors of the English East India Company. Impressed by its contents Col. Saxon asked Roberts to get it translated into English.

In Delhi, Sir Syed spared time to extend his work *Jam-i-Jam* on the chronology of rulers of Delhi. Now he decided to compile the work in Urdu and published under the title of *silsilat-ul-Tawarikh* in 1852. In this work he worked out the chronology of the Muslim rulers of Delhi from its conquest by Malik Qutbuddin Aibek, the lieutenant of Sultan Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam (appointed in 1193 A.D.). This is also like the earlier *Jam-i-Jami*, a work of great historical importance wherein an attempt has been made to provide a chronological framework on the Muslim rule in South Asia since the close of the twelfth century.¹² The work was presented to the archaeological society when Sir Syed was made its honorary member. (The Archaeological Society of Delhi was founded with Hon. J. Thomason as its patron and Sir T.T. Metcalf as its president on April, 1847).¹³

As a member of the Archaeological Society Sir Syed started taking interest in examining the bricks that he excavated at the site of the ancient Hastinapur. He wrote an article in Urdu on ancient bricks and read it before the member of the society, presenting two bricks, each one 20 inches wide and two and half inches thick on 7 October, 1852. The article was translated into English under the title 'On the Bricks employed in Different Ages in India'. It contains this important remark; "From this it appeared to me plain that whatever changes that took place in other things from one age to another, similar changes take places, I came to the conclusion that the ages of these places could be discovered from therefrom".¹⁴

Praising the importance of this remark made by Sir Syed, the Secretary of the society, J. Cargill¹⁵ put down the following observation in the English translation of the article:

"I am not aware whether any such remark has been made with regard to archeological remains of this country; and, if not, the *Moonsif* deserves the highest

10 *Asar-ul-Sanadid*, ed. Khaliq Anjum, Urdu Academy, Delhi. 1990, Pp.26-29.

11 *Ibid.*, Pp.43-4.

12 Cf. *Silsilat-ul-Tawarikh*.

13 C.W. Troll, A note on An Early Topographical work of Saiyyid Ahmad Khan, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, S. No. 1, 1972, p.741.

14 Cf. C.W. Troll, A Note on An Early Topographical work of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar-al-Sanadid*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London No. 1. 1972, p. 145

15 J. Cargill was the Secretary of the Society and Principal of the Delhi College at that time.



A Sketch of Purana Qila from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

praise for its acuteness. In the genuine ability few Mohammadans are equal to the Moonsif, or to Nawab Zea Ood-deen, both members of the society.”
16

Intellectually most percipient, Sir Syed could grasp the importance of new ideas and successfully apply them in his research work.

As for the second edition of the *Asar-ul Sanadid*, (pub. in 1854) it deals only with the historical buildings, water works, pleasure gardens, bridges, etc., and contains the first additional chapter, besides some addition. Besides the first chapter, the account of the Observatory, Jantar Mantar, erected in 1724, during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-1748) is based on the work *Zitch-i-Muhammad Shahi* that was available to the author after the publication of the first edition. The manuscript copy of this work is there in the University Collection in Aligarh and contains Sir Syed's autograph with the date on which he had purchased it. This edition is important in that Sir Syed referred to his sources of information in the

margin of the pages, revealing his access to the vast historical literature produced in India during the medieval period. Some of the works utilized by him do not seem to have survived the 1857 revolt. A word may also be added here about the style of the author that suits history writing. It is a pity that the later historians, with exception of Zakaullah, preferred to write history in ornate Urdu prose, attempting display of their mastery over literary excellence. This hardly suits the narration of historical events because of literary embellishment.

A few words are in order here about the controversy arising from the publication of the second edition of *Asar-ul-Sanadid* regarding change in Sir Syed's religious ideology. Some of the modern scholars think that chapter, relating to the religious divines, etc. excluded from the second edition reveals that the author's religio-political views had undergone a change under the influence of his English associates by the time of its publication in 1854. He no longer considered the historical role performed by religious divines of Delhi of any relevance to the present or to

16 A note on an early Topographical of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Asar al- Sanadid*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, op. cit. p.145

the future, although earlier he had extolled it with pride in the first edition of his *Asar-ul-Sanadid*. Hence, he deleted this lengthy portion relating to *Asar-ul-Sanadid* regarding change in Sir Syed's religious ideology. Some of the modern scholars think that chapter, relating to the religious divines, etc. excluded from the second edition reveals that the author's religio-political views had undergone a change under the influence of his English associates by the time of its publication in 1854. He no longer considered the historical role performed by religious divines of Delhi of any relevance to the present or to the future, although earlier he had extolled it with pride in the first edition of his *Asar-ul-Sanadid*. Hence, he deleted this lengthy portion relating to them in the second revised edition of 1854. B.A. Dar writes: "In one of his chapters, he (Sir Syed) relates with great fervor the reformist zeal of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and his noble companions. This chapter he had to delete from his book's second edition in 1854 as by that time the political situation had entirely changed. The time demanded that the Muslims must eschew political activity."¹⁷

There is no shred of evidence, either literary or circumstantial, to support Dar's statement. Sir Syed himself writes in the preface to the second edition

that Arthur Roberts (1818-1866) persuaded him to rewrite the parts relating to the monuments in simple style because the rhymed prose was difficult to translate. Thereupon, Sir Syed prepared and published the second edition in 1854 with the addition of its first chapter. This new chapter contains the tables of rulers from the earliest time up to author's own time, for ancient times, Sir Syed refers to Sanskrit *pothis*, maintained by Hindu *Jyotshis* (astrologers). Besides the birth, accession of a ruler to the throne, his death, and the duration of his reign, the *qaum* (ethnic group) to which he belonged have also been mentioned. The term *qaum* has been used throughout in the sense of an ethnic group, clan or Muslim *biradri*. The copies of the inscriptions found on the building have been given in their original form. As regards the English translation by Roberts, it is not traceable, the French translation completed by French Orientalist, Garcin de Tassy in 1861 indicates its popularity outside India. The fame and credit that this edition brought to its author must have been a source of encouragement and inspiration for him to continue his work on the medieval Indian history. It is also worth mentioning that *Asar-ul-Sanadid* is the first local history of an Indian city written in a historical perspective and with objectivity. It was a first attempt of its kind



A Sketch of Jahanuma- Purana Qila from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

17 B.A. Dar, *The Religious Thought of Saiyyid Ahmad Khan*, 2nd edition, Lahore, 1971, p. 81

in Urdu providing a model for scholars. It is, however, a pity that the works that were written on different town by Urdu writer's in Sir Syed tradition do not come up to the standard set by him. Therein we find facts and popular legends mixed up together.

A word may be added about the continuing interest

as cognizance symbols of a great person (*Mahapurasa*). Originally this image would have been simply an addition to the list of the colossal Buddha images of the Kushana period. But it acquired special significance because of its unique description of the Bodha-Gaya Shrine in the center of Lion throne just below the main image.¹⁸



Rare image of Buddha, Sir Syed Collection

that Sir Syed evinced in collecting the archeological finds discovered in Aligarh or the area around even at a time when he was preoccupied with the building and management of his newly established Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh. His collection in the museum of Archeology in the Aligarh Muslim University is rich in that it contains sculptures of the first-second century. For instance, the image of Buddha which belongs to Mathura School of sculpture and is carved out of the well-known red sandstone found in the quarries of Fathepur Sikri, Tantpur, Bagance etc., is of great importance. Though its head and two arms are lost the remaining part (1.04-meter-high and 90cm. wide at the base) "clearly indicates that the image was in *abhay-mudra* with the left hand raising on the thigh. The feet of the image are marked with auspicious signs like *cakra*, *triratna*, etc., which are considered

Mention may also be made of Buddha's image, Accession No. 41 which also belongs to Sir Syed's collection and is an important archeological find. It shows Buddha in a meditative pose; on the left side of the damaged pedestal is shown a lady who has come for Buddha's worship, followed by six female standing figures probably in attendance on her. It is also made of red sandstone.¹⁹

Likewise, the inscriptions acquired by Sir Syed and preserved in the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, are also of historical importance. Mention may be made here of the Koil (modern Aligarh) Minaret inscription, dated A.D. 1255. It was originally fixed on the door of Minaret, constructed by the order of the regent Malik Bahauddin Balban (later Sultan Balban) during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud (reigned: 1246-1261 A.D.) in

18 Cf. R.C.Gaur, *Studies in Indian Archeology and Ancient India*, (Jaipur Publication Scheme), 1997, Vol II, p. 404 Idem, A Rare Buddha Image, Plate A, *Selected Art Pieces Of Aligarh, Archeology Museum*, Jaipur, 1999, p. 1-10.

19 *Selected Art Pieces of Aligarh Archaeology Museum*, op.cit., p.3.

originally fixed on the door of Minaret, constructed by the order of the regent Malik Bahauddin Balban (later Sultan Balban) during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud (reigned: 1246-1261 A.D.) in the Jama Mosque later on demolished by the East India Company's officers after the suppression of 1857 revolt. The Minaret was built on the pattern of the Qutb Minar at Delhi. The inscription is important in that we find the supplementary information that the tradition of assigning the territorial unit of Koil to the premier noble of the Sultanate continued uninterrupted since the time of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish (reigned: 1211-1236). Its calligraphy has also attracted the attention of experts of calligraphy since Edward Thomas. The translation of the inscription done by Ghulam Yazdani in English reads:²⁰

“This building (was erected) during the reign of the great Sultan the master of the necks of nations, Nasir-ud-Dunya-wad-Din, the Sultan of Sultans, the protector of the Faithful, the heir of the kingdom of Solomon, the Lord of the seal in the Empire of the world, Abu-i-Muzaffar Mahmud bin Sultan (May God perpetuate his kingdom and authority), by order of the Malik of the world, the great exalted and blessed Khan, Baha-ul-Haqq wad-Din, the Malik of the Maliks of the East and China, Balban ash-Shamsi, during the days of his government, (may his high qualities endure), on the 10th of Rajab 652 A.H. (1254 A.D.).”²¹

Likewise, the ten marble slabs on which the Quranic verses of the Sura *al-Fajr* were beautifully inscribed by Yaqut Raqm, the leading calligraphist who is said to have been commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan to inscribe the inscriptions of the Taj at Agra.²² They originally adorned the Akbarabadi Mosque at Delhi built by one of the wives of Shah Jahan in 1665 A.D. Sir Syed describes this mosque graphically in his *Asar-ul-Sanadid* as the most beautiful mosque with a *madrassa*.²³ Later, it was demolished by the English army after the suppression of the 1857 revolt. All this indicates, that Sir Syed was not only aware of the historical importance of archeology and epigraphy but also casts light on his concern for the preservation of India's Cultural heritage.

Equally important was the selection by him of most standard histories, compiled by Muslim historians in Persian during medieval times. He edited each text critically on the basis of a number of manuscript copies available and then had it published, considering it an important part of his intellectual heritage. The compilers of the three works, edited by Sir Syed, were basically historians. They appear to have been conscious of the uniqueness of the concept of time and space. The works that attracted his attention were produced during the heyday of Muslim power.

The first Medieval work taken up was the famous *Ain-i-Akbari* compiled by Abul Fazl during Akbar's reign (1556-1605). This was a unique work of its kind. Not only the apparatus of the government that underwent important changes under Akbar has been described in detail but socio-economic conditions and the history of the *zamindars*, belonging to different ethnic groups in every pargana of a *Sarkar* in the *subas* of the Empire receive fair treatment in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Before the publication of recent researches on China in European languages, *Ain-i-Akbari* was considered as the first gazetteer compiled in the world.²⁴ Sir Syed Published his critically edited text of the first and third volumes in 1885. The second volume was destroyed in the press at the suppression of 1857 Revolt and recapture of Delhi by the British army.²⁵ In 1862 was published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal the text of Ziauddin Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, critically edited by Sir Syed. He himself published the edited text of Emperor Jahangir's *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* in Ghazipur and Aligarh in 1863-64. It is worth noting that the trauma of 1857 that had psychologically shattered Sir Syed for the time being, also lead his sensitive mind to do something for the social and economic progress of the community. He took up as his life-log mission the modernization of Indian Muslims through the dissemination of European learning and sciences among them. He, however, spared time even when pre-occupied with the missionary work to edit the above-mentioned *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* and *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* because their study was expected to make the Muslims conscious of their

20 Cf. Edward Thomas, *The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi*, Delhi (reprint) 1967, p 130 also Jamal Muhammad Siddiqui, *Aligarh District: A Historical Survey*, New Delhi. 1981, p.224.

21 Cf. *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica*, 1913-14, p 23, PL. XI(a); also *Aligarh Districts: A Historical Survey op cit.*, Pp 225-226.

22 Cf. S.K. Bhatnagar, *History of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh*, Delhi, 1969, Pp, 109-110.

23 *Asar-ul-Sanadid* Vol. I, op.cit., p 349.

24 The tradition of compiling local gazetteers in China goes back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) Cf. *Pragmatic Literacy*. East and West, 1200-1330, ed. Richard Britnell, The Bydell Press, Woodbralge, 1997, Pp 235-246

25 Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernization in India and Pakistan*, New York, 1980 p.76.

past grandeur and to show the others how dynamic and forward looking were Muslims from fourteenth to seventeenth century. To Sir Syed history was not like other medieval sciences that had lost their validity in the Modern Age as his criticism of *sub-standard* historical works compiled during eighteenth century shows. The eighteenth century Indo-Persian historians, passing through the period of decadence, failed to maintain the tradition of their predecessors in conveying correct information about historical events: in fact, they moved into a period in which change was being associated with fear of the future. The demoralized historians acted as panegyrists of an incompetent ruler either in awe of him or in the hope of getting some favor from him. Speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of the validity in the Modern Age as his criticism of *sub-standard* historical works compiled during eighteenth century shows. The eighteenth century Indo-Persian historians, passing through the period of decadence, failed to maintain the tradition of their predecessors in conveying correct information about historical events: in fact, they moved into a period in which change was being associated with fear of the future. The demoralized historians acted as panegyrists of an incompetent ruler either in awe of him or in the hope of getting some favor from him. Speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of the Scientific Society on 9 January, 1863, Sir Syed said that his countrymen were ignorant of the historical events that had occurred in the past and were unable to draw any lesson from them for the future. They had no idea as to how the small nations of the world made progress and became great like big shady tree. They had no knowledge of great nations that once thrived like huge blossoming fruit tree but withered and perished. As regards the histories written in Asia, they suffered from verbosity and did not convey information about the event of cultural significance; for these historians' historiography meant the mention of date of the accession or death of individual kings, the battles they fought or the territories they seized. They did not attach any importance to the description of causes responsible for the rise and fall of civilization.²⁶ Thus Sir Syed considered history the source of inspiration and rejuvenation. He saw the specificities of history in the perspective of the process of constant renewal and continuity.

In an attempt to encourage research work in the history of Islam and Medieval India Sir Syed encouraged and inspired some of his associates to interpret history scientifically placing due emphasis on the role of causality. Here mention may be made of Maulana Hali who composed his historical mathnavi *Maddo-Jazr-i-Islam* (Ebb and Flow of Islam) at the request of Sir Syed in 1879. Departing from the established convention Hali describes in a rational manner how the pagan Arab society was transformed within a generation into that of the representatives of Universal culture under the dynamic leadership of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). The revolutionary concepts of the unity of Allah and of brotherhood of man gave rise to the ideal of egalitarianism among Muslims the world over. According to Hali, the vital role of Islam was spiritual rather than political, and deification of man was repugnant to its teachings. Hali also emphasizes the fact that the early Arabs being open-minded borrowed and assimilated scientific knowledge from other nations they came in contact with. The Arab geographers travelled to distant countries of the civilized world known to them., and wrote on the geography and culture of their peoples. The contribution made by the Arabs to natural and physical sciences was so rich that the Europeans inherited it through their contact with Muslims in Spain. Lastly, Hali laments that the Muslims not keep up their brilliant tradition, giving way to lethargy and moral degeneration. Consequently, the progressive religion of Islam reduced to jumble of mechanical rituals, although it is in reality the fountain-head of progressive moral laws. This well-known poem served its purpose of awakening the social consciousness of the readers and thus lead to enlightenment of the community.²⁷

To conclude: Sir Syed regarded scientific interpretation of historical facts as an intellectual discipline. He thought that the interpretation of historical evidence contained in the standard sources in accordance with new scientific methodology would make people conscious of their cultural roots on the one hand and arouse them on the other to compete with other peoples on the road to progress. He took pains to collect whatever object of archeology he could lay his hands on for the inspiration of the coming generations. Among

26Cf. Selected Documents in Aligarh Archives, ed. Yusuf Husain Khan, Aligarh 1977, Pp 43-45.

27 I do not agree with Aziz Ahmad who implies through his assessment of its impact on Muslim intelligentsia that its publication gave rise to the cult of Spain and created a feeling of conceit, Cf. *Islamic Modernization in India and Pakistan* (O.U.P., London), 1967, Pp97-98.

Indians, he was pioneer in laying down the foundation of scientific research in history as well as editing Medieval texts on European model of text-editing. It will be no exaggeration that in the Urdu language no modern scholars seem to have come up to the standard set by him.

Identifying the Historical Archaeologist in Sir Syed

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Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of Aligarh Muslim University was many things, a reformer, an educationist, a visionary, an essayist, a journalist, a government servant but there is one aspect of his personality that has been relatively less highlighted and explored and surprisingly much less worked upon, that of him being a historian. Christian Troll and C.M.Naim are the only people who have tried to explore this aspect in context of the authorship of his book *Asar-us-Sanadid* and the changing nature of its two editions. This paper however, is trying to argue that Sir Syed was not only an erudite and learned historian in the proper sense of the term as is reflected in his historical work *Asar-us-Sanadid* but he can also be identified as the first Historical archaeologist of India. Much before the arrival of Cunningham and Sir John Marshall, it was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who recognized the importance of the proper study, exploration, measurement and documentation of the material remains of the past and to relate these material remains with the available historical sources. Before going further it would suffice here to give a brief outline of what I mean by historical archaeology, it basically means studying and understanding material remains of the past through information from historical sources, moreover if this technique is applied to a site of Medieval period it is referred to as Medieval Archaeology.¹

Having said this, *Asar-us-Sanadid* becomes interesting because throughout the book Sir Syed keeps describing various architectural remains of Delhi and its environs and he keeps providing historical context to those remains by references from historical sources regarding their social, cultural and political nature.

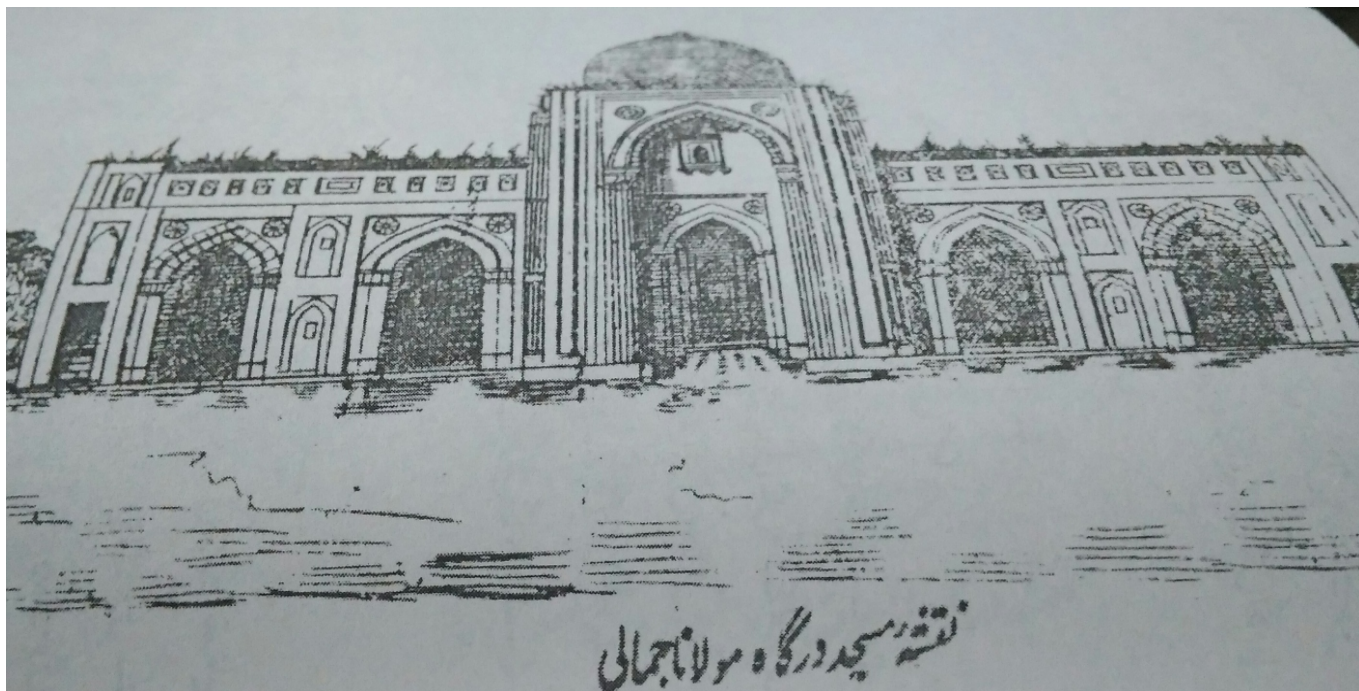
Asar-us-Sanadid is the work which would primarily be analysed in this paper to highlight the historical endeavours of Sir Syed, yet this wasn't the only work of history that was attempted by him, a brief overview of some of his other historical works needs to be given before going further. Being the witness

to and a part of the last generation of the Mughal nobility and its grandeur, Sir Syed must be viewed in the context of what made him a man of a historical vision. Educated in several traditional sciences, Sir Syed had always been a curious student. Furthermore his interest in History is evident from the choice of the subject matter for his books. He, before publishing the second edition of *Asar-us-Sanadid* had already compiled a list of kings who ruled Delhi during the last five thousand years; this list began with Raja Yudhishtira and culminated in the name of *Qaisar-i-Hind* Empress Victoria.² The list of names contains around 202 names of rulers with that of their fathers, their year of accession, their capitals and the duration of their reigns. Another historical work that Sir Syed undertook but that has now been lost was the history of Bijnore that he compiled during his tenure of Sadr Ameen there. This work composed in 1855 was at the office of the Sadr Board when the revolt took place and in the revolt the manuscript was lost.³ Sir Syed is also credited with revising the historical text of *Ain-i-Akbari*. This particular book was identified by him as a text of utmost historical importance and the absence of a proper version available for further study left him with the task to collect several copies of the work and compare them and arrive at a properly compiled revised and edited text of *Ain-i-Akbari*, which still had some shortcomings yet the fact that Sir Syed produced a glossary of the unfamiliar words of Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Hindi and Sanskrit and explained the terms prevalent during Akbar's period shows his keen interest. Interest of Sir Syed in visual history also comes out in the fact that he got *Ain* illustrated with the help of some famous artists of Delhi. Thus this not only points to the fact that Sir Syed recognized the importance of historical content but also that he wanted to make historical texts available in a way that it can be conducive for future research as well.

1 Mehta, R.N., *Medieval Archaeology*, Delhi, 1979, p.69

2 Hālī, Khvājah Alṭāf Ḥusain, *Hayat-i-Javed : a biographical account of Sir Sayyid*, translation, K.H. Qadiri & David J. Matthews. Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1979, p.27

3 Ibid, p. 28



Sketch of Jamali Kamali Mosque from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

It can also be state with some reservation that the critical approach that today defines the subject of History was at some level being put to use by Sir Syed to come to truthful conclusions. To give an example, while revising the 2nd volume of *Ain-i-Akbari*, Sir Syed was faced with a serious problem because the section on *Ain-i-Kharaj* was different in all the copies of the *Ain* that Sir Syed had and this meant that there was no means to come to the correct information. At this time, a book written during Sir Syed's maternal grandfather Nawab Dabirud Daula's time came to light, which had a detailed and accurate account of the revenue of the Mughal emperors and Sir Syed copied the account of Akbar's reign and included it in his second volume of *Ain-i-Akbari*.⁴ Another important historical source that has been revised and published under Sir Syed's name is the work *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, a reliable and authentic history of the Sultanate period. This work was done during Sir Syed's posting at Moradabad around 1860 AD. The dedication of Sir Syed is visible in his laborious endeavours of collecting four different copies of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* from Imperial Library, Delhi, from Mr. Elliot, Mr. Edward Thomas and from Benares and using them to revise his own copy of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* before sending it for publication by Asiatic Society of Bengal.⁵ Still it has been argued that both these texts have several errors due to the limited number of versions of manuscripts consulted, and several misreadings have been done

in these works on the part of Sir Syed, which needs to be acknowledged and stated.

Despite all his shortcomings, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was a pioneer in the field of working on Antiquities of Delhi. His idea of writing a book on the physical structures left behind at Delhi and not just describing them but measuring them with diligence and then relating them to the larger political and social fabric of the time appears a unique idea. Efforts of such sort had not been made in this manner ever before. Though Christian Troll in his essay argues that *Asar-us-Sanadid* was written and conceived in the manner of earlier topographical and biographical writing in Persian, yet there are no references given to the earlier works on similar lines except for one, *Sair-al-Manazil*, I'll come to how this text was still inferior to Sir Syed's work later. Irfan Habib argues that there was no earlier tradition in Persian of a book about old buildings and their inscriptions,⁶ thus making Sir Syed's effort a path-breaking one in the field of historical archaeology. One also needs to keep in mind that during the time when this work is being composed, neither the field of archaeology, and much less the field of historical archaeology had developed in its proper form in India, thus this work can be understood as a precursor to those subjects which were being formulated 19th century India. *Asar-us-Sanadid* is unique in the way that it brings forth the study of antiquarian remains which is

4 Ibid, p. 30

5 Ibid, p. 58

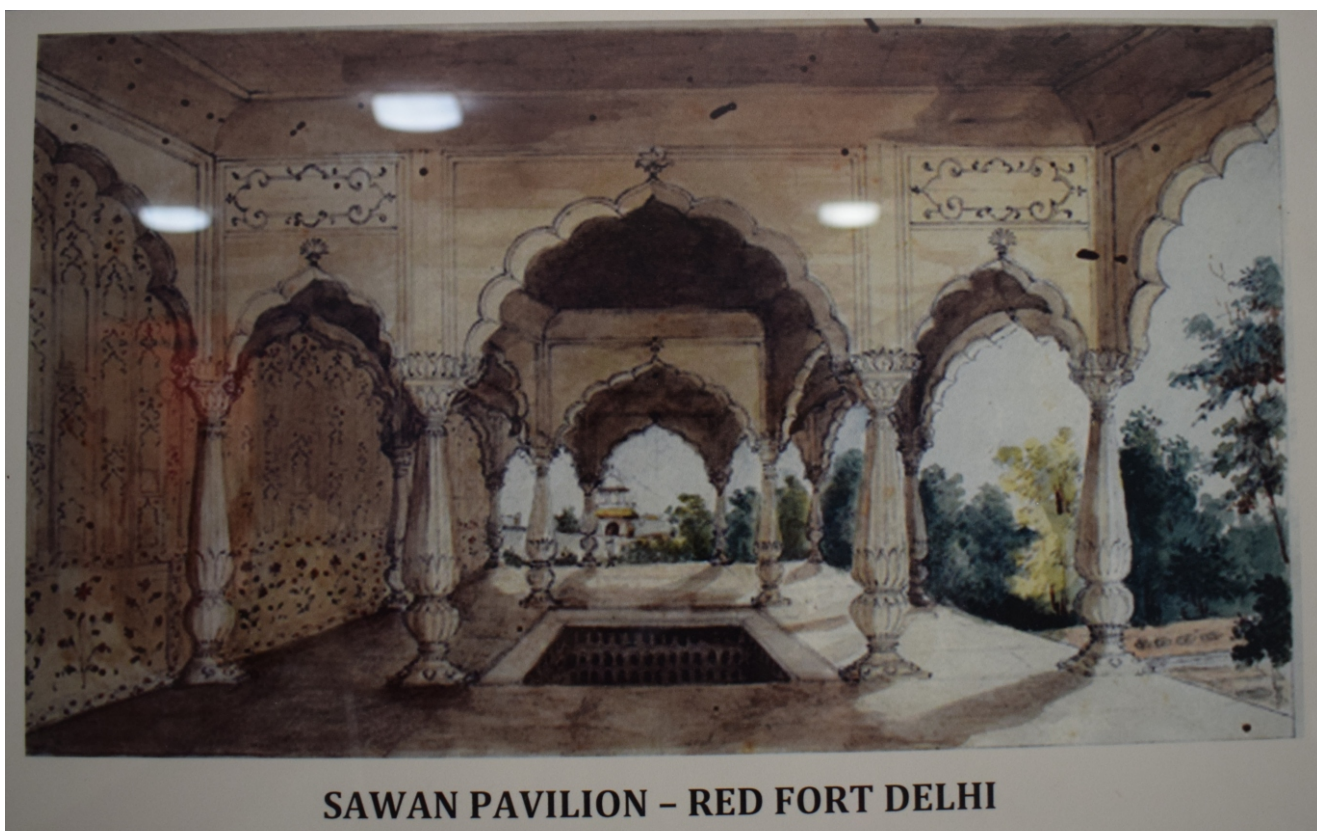
6 Naim, C. M., 'Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called 'Asar-al-Sanadid'', *Modern Asian Studies*, 2010, pp.1-40, p. 15

something completely divorced from traditional Indo-Persian historiography, and at the same time it also incorporates the *tazkira* tradition of providing biographies of famous personality of the city which is something that is prevalent in Persian historiographical tradition, thus by attempting to bring these two aspects of history writing together, *Asar-us-Sanadid* becomes a unique endeavour.

Asar-us-Sanadid, a book with the first chapter describing the buildings outside the walled city; the second, the Fort and the structures within it; the third, the walled city of Shahjahanabad; and the fourth the people of 'Dilli', can be considered an exercise in studying history in totality, as a whole with physical remains, historical accounts, structures, traditions, the people and their memories and customs all coming together to develop a three dimensional picture of the past.

Even the techniques Sir Syed utilizes in describing the historical nature of the buildings and spaces appears to be quite historical in the sense that he critically analyses information from various sources, gives space to all the varying divergent accounts and traditions and then systematically debunks the myths and brings out the true historical

information. To give an example, while describing the establishment of city of Hazratnagar in 1418 following the plunder of Amir Timur Sir Syed argues that since at that time no trace of the city Hazratnagar was found hence it can be accepted that the area of Hazratnagar that is famous in his time might be the original Hazratnagar city, here he like a trained historian inserts the remark that this knowledge is current in popular perception and no such information is found in any of the historical books.⁷ It can be seen that Sir Syed's understanding of difference between historical sources and semi-historical accounts informs his work. Furthermore, Sir Syed's emphasis on historical books being the accurate source of historical information comes up at various places across *Asar-us-sanadid*; while analysing the location of Mubarakpur fort and city commenced by Mubarak Shah Hazrat Khan in 1433, Sir Syed first gives the popular perception of the fort and city and says that it is popular that this fort is at the location of the tomb of this very king which is opposite to the tomb of Safdur Jung and because of which that village is popular as Mubarak shah kotla, following this Sir Syed gives a counter argument by giving reference to historical accounts and claims that the abovementioned popular assumption is false



A sketch from *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

⁷ Sir Syed, *Asar-us-Sanadeed*, Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh, 2007, p. 106

because it is known that the city of Mubarakpur was established on the bank of the river and during the time of its establishment river didn't flow next to mubarakpur kotla, this he proves by giving the fact that there are buildings much older present at that place where the river was supposed to be, thus he finally concludes that according to his calculation and understanding the Mubarakpur fort and city are located at the present location of area Mubarakpur raiti.⁸

Not only is Sir Syed utilizing many sources of information on History to come to the most reasonable truth about the past but he also is utilizing that historical information to deduce means to analyse physical structures. He explores the style and grandeur of architecture of a building to understand the nature of the patron, like he does in the case of *Koshak-i-Noor*, near Firoz Shah Kotla where he claims that the fine nature of the work on this building reflects that it has been built by a King.⁹ Sir Syed also uses the method of most modern historians of the identification of characteristic features of architectural style to come to the probable dates of the monuments, to take an example, Sir Syed uses his understanding of the architectural features of Afghani style of building activity to come to the conclusion that the Begumpur Masjid belonged to the Pathani (Afghani) style of Architecture and hence to Afghan period.¹⁰ He even gives a systematic description of various constructions works categorized on the basis of monarchs who undertook those constructions.¹¹

Sir Syed knew the importance of archaeological remains and in the case of contradiction of information between historical and archaeological sources he preferred the archaeological ones since it is well known that the material remains are the most truthful of the remains that have come down from history. Hence in the case of contradictions in the dates regarding dates regarding Asokan era in History books and the inscription on the Ashokan pillar, in the second edition Sir Syed gives preference to the Asokan pillar as the reliable source of information.¹² There are many more examples of this kind.¹³

From reading *Asar-us-sanadeed* it appears that for Sir Syed, history was not devoid of the texture of layers of human existences and the marks they leave behind on the structures. There are innumerable references to structures being described in the process of constant change through construction activity been done on and around them. To give an example Sir Syed mentions Asad Burj as a structure that was damaged by canons during a disturbance and was then reconstructed during the reign of Akbar Shah Second and has been made exactly like the original structure,¹⁴ this also hints upon a very important aspect in history and archaeology, that of preservation and renovation, and Sir Syed's consciousness about these issues. From another example in *Asarussanadeed* it appears that Sir Syed appreciated the repair works undertaken at one Sunehri Masjid which had gone to the condition of ruins and was about to crumble when Qazi Muhammad Faizullah Khan Sahab good intentionally repaired it as new, thus the importance of preservation of the historical structures in their original form is something not very relevant to Sir Syed, but he does mention that the history of the mosque was left inscribed on it.¹⁵

Sir Syed also provides an interesting detail from his architectural analyses of Qutub Minar, He writes that in some history books, Qutb Minar was identified as mosque's minaret which cannot be true because the column's door is north-facing similar to Hindu temples, while the doors of minarets are always east facing, like of the pillar begun by Sultan Alaaddin Khilji which in accordance to Muslim construction traditions, was located on a plinth as well. This is unlike the Hindus who do not use plinths, a feature also missing from Qutub Minar. Another argument added here is that the structure's first level also shows evidence of bell-and-chain motif of Hindu temples. And from these various facts, Sir Syed argues that the first floor of Qutub Minar is of a Hindu origin and the epitaphs have been inscribed where there were once idols.¹⁶

In *Asar-us-Sanadeed* the importance of people for a city is also evident, the texture and depth that develops in history once the actual social and cultural life of people who inhabit the place being

8 *Asar-us-Sanadid*, p. 108

9 *Ibid*, p.211

10 *Ibid*, p. 221

11 *Ibid*, 180-193

12 *Ibid*, 168

13 *Ibid*, 172-173

14 *Ibid*, 121

15 *Ibid*, 318, 322

16 *Ibid*, 183

described is incorporated, is intriguing, and this was something that was probably recognized by Sir Syed, thus his description of the gates and people on the gateways of the Jami Mosque, Faiz Bazar and Chandni Chowk leaves the reader of *Asar-us-Sanadid* awed by the lifestyle that was. There appears an intimate description of the public space that must have been a regular feature of cities across Mughal India, the presence of small vendors selling faluda, kebab, sugarcane juice at the Southern Gateway of the Jama Masjid of Shahjahanabad adds perspective to the physical structure of the mosque for a historian. Similarly the Northern gate is reported to have magicians and storytellers who must have been recounting the tales of Amir Hamza, Hathim Tai and the *Bustan-e-Khiyal* for a long time to several generations of people. On the Eastern Gateway there is reported in *Asarusanadeed* the presence of the market of fabric and animal etc.¹⁷ similarly the recreation of the beauty of the Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazar with the description of the beautiful shops that lined them and the causeways that ran through and across these bazaars is also fascinating.¹⁸

Sir Syed himself appears mesmerized by the physical structures and the effect they produce, he even in his plain and simple style of writing couldn't help but describe the beauty and lively nature of the city that is visible from the top of one of the minarets of Jama Masjid.¹⁹

One thing, however, that needs to be kept in mind while reading Sir Syed is that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, not only was learning and growing as a thinker but also as a historian, thus there are a lot of differences in the two versions of *Asar-us-Sanadeed*, published in 1847 and 1854. Without going into the details, it can be safely stated that while in the former he appears closer to the flowery eulogizing Indo-Persian historical tradition; in the latter he appears closer to the plain, simple, descriptive accounts of the European tradition of history writing. Even the subject matter chosen for the book, that of antiquities, is something which had been developed during the Renaissance in Europe where the physical remains of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations were studied. It is well known that the target audience of this book also included a large number of Europeans and this fact along with Sir

Syed's incorporation in the Archaeological and Historical societies of the time, might have been the reason of the shift in his style of writing. Syed Ahmad was well aware of the interest of colonial officers in India's history and ancient monuments. His first book was even written at the behest of a British judge. He and his brother had purchased manuscripts and made copies of old historical texts for British officers.²⁰ Moreover, Sir Syed's developing interest in the field of historical study corresponded with the work being conducted by British in the arena of acquiring knowledge about the Indian people.

It was due to the rising importance of knowing the colonized people and the interesting developments at the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in 1847 the Delhi Archaeological Society was formulated with Hon. J. Thomason as its patron and Sir T.T. Metcalfe as the president. Even before Sir Syed became a part of this society in 1852, the publications in the journal of the society were utilizing Sir Syed's *Asar-us-sanadid's* text as an authority on Delhi's monuments. Furthermore it has been argued that many in the ruling circle took favourable notice of the book. The journal *Qiran-al-Sa'dain*, published by Delhi College under the supervision of its principal, Dr Aloys Sprenger, remarked: 'This book is excellent and is of great importance to the Society that has been founded at Delhi for the furtherance of researches into the old buildings of the past'.²¹ Thus it can be said that the attempt of Syed Ahmad of retaining the old market, the Indian readers of Urdu, and of capturing the emerging markets of the colonial officers who read Urdu, and European visitors and sightseers in Delhi²² was achieved considerably well. Since, Sir Syed soon after the publication of the book became an active member of the Delhi Archaeological Society.

It was in the journal of Delhi Archaeological Society itself that Sir Syed published a pioneering paper on the bricks utilised in construction in India during various time periods. Sir Syed in this paper argues that due to different customs of different ages there are variations in the sizes of the bricks and thus he argues that bricks from the period of Hindu, Pathan, Akbar, Shah Jahan, Mohammad Shah and other periods would be different and these can be utilized to understand the age of places where different types of bricks are found. Then he also describes the way he got hold of bricks at the site of Hastinapur where

17 Ibid, p. 278-281

18 Ibid, 142-143

19 Ibid, 177

20 Naim, p. 12

21 Ibid, p. 14

22 Ibid, p.12

he had to ask his servants to dig 5-6 yards; and the bricks that were found were 20 inches long, 10 inches broad and 2 1/2 inch thick. Sir Syed performed the meticulous task of measuring all the monuments and providing the illustrations, sketches and copies of various inscriptions present on the monuments surveyed by him. This does reflect his dedication yet Sir Syed also has his own shortcomings. There has been a raging debate regarding the authorship of the first issue of *Asar-us-sanadid* and there is a well-established argument that the book was actually composed by Imam Bakhsh Sahba'i, C.M.Naim, a leading authority on *Asar-us-sanadid* argues that most of the Preface, including the panegyrics, was composed by Imam Bakhsh, as was much of the fourth chapter (on the people of Delhi). Their bombast and hyperbole clearly show Imam Bakhsh's hand.²³ Furthermore the editions of *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* have been criticised for being faulty at several places with not proper editing, moreover these historical sources had been worked upon and published before Sir Syed as well, and his work on them was for the most part a reproduction of the earlier works of Gladwin and Qaiser Jahan. Sir Syed's work on *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, however, is a pioneering one though it was his brother Syed Muhammad who was the one who had a major role to play in this effort, he struggled to get several copies of the text, from the Libraries of the King of Delhi, Raja Raghuband Singh, Nawab Faiz Ali Khan of Jhajjar and several other places.²⁴

It has also been claimed that the subject of the city of Delhi had been worked upon earlier as well, but though the subject matter was worked upon by other people before him yet the historical and the antiquarian context was something that makes *Asar-us-sanadid* a book much superior in content to all the three books written before it, them being Mirza Sangin Beg's *Sair-al-Manazil*, Abdul Qadir's *Waqai'-i-Abdul Qadir Khani* (1831) and Zainul Abidin Shirwani's *Bustan-al-Siyahat* (1834). In the latter two works Architectural and historical details hardly have been given importance and the buildings are described in off-hand manner.²⁵ In the former work of Sangin Beg the limited knowledge of the author regarding history and inscriptions leaves the book more of a work of literature than of history. As opposed to that in *Asar-us-sanadid* the detailed copy of the inscriptions on every monument surveyed by Sir Syed are reproduced and sketches of most of the

buildings are provided which in itself seems like a great service to the cause of further research work in history.

Sir Syed's consciousness regarding the importance of history is evident from the fact that in the second edition of *Asar-us-Sanadeed* Sir Syed explicitly states that the book was a 'history' (tarikh), and was not a mere 'account' (ahwal).²⁶ And though we have become unconscious of it but Sir Syed's historical spirit is still alive in various subtle ways at AMU. The inscription on the main entrance of the Jama Masjid of the University was originally a part of the Akabarabadi Mosque built during Shah Jahan's reign. After its demolition in 1857 these remains were given by the government to one Mirza Ilahi Bakhsh from whom Sir Syed acquired them and put them up at the Aligarh Mosque.²⁷ The construction of the Mosque also resembles the Shahjahani Mosque architecture. Hence, Sir Syed's historical spirit has been subtly hidden in the construction of this very university where the original MAO college building were designed and engineered by Sir Syed himself, and the architecture and layout also reflect his historically engrained personality.

Sir Syed's historical contributions have been positively subsumed by his social and political endeavours and thus there is always a need to remember and revive the critical and dynamic academician in Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. His work *Asar-us-sanadid* analysed in this paper provides an insight into the material culture of Delhi prior to its destruction and decay following 1857 mutiny, and this further aggravates the importance of *Asar-us-sanadid*. The field of archaeology and even History of Indian civilization were just beginning to take roots in the mid-19th century and at that time Sir Syed's work was a pioneering one. He was working on aspects of historical archaeology even before Cunningham and John Marshall. Even before them Sir Syed was spanning historical structures with a measuring tape in his hand and historical context in his head, and for that we need to give some credit to Sir Syed and celebrate him as a historian.

23 Ibid, p.8

24 Elliot, Sir Henry Miers, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol. VI, London, 1871, p.277

25 Naim, p. 19

26 Naim, p.26

27 Abbas, Asghar, Aligarh ke Asar us Sanadeed, Sir Syed Number, Farid Book Depot, Delhi, 2017, p. 760.

Summary

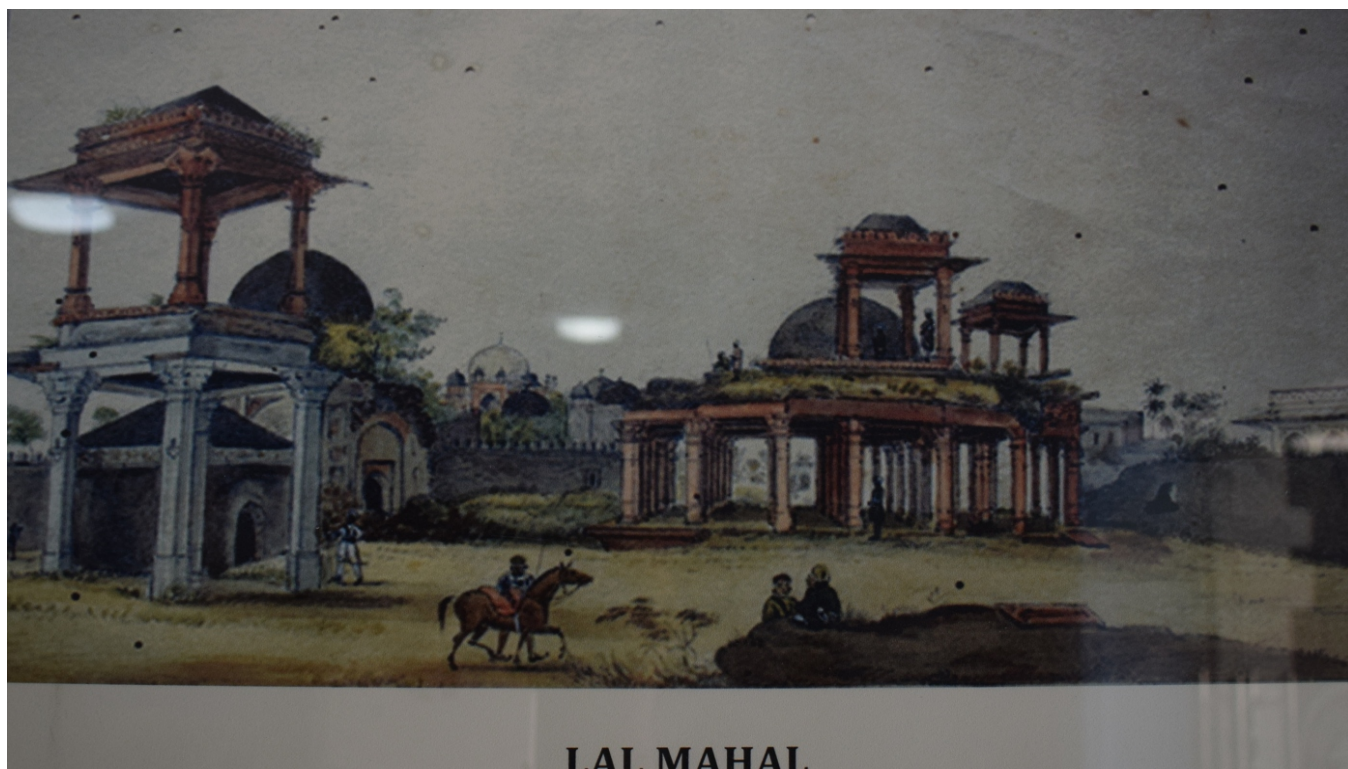
'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Work on Archaeology Entitled *Athar-us-Sanadid*: A Study'*

-Nazir Ahmad

A number of works have been written on Sir Syed's work *Asar-us-Sanadid* and Nazir Ahmad's article 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's Work on Archaeology Entitled *Athar-us-Sanadid*: A Study,' is an important part of this scholarship. The author though gives a detailed analysis of *Asar-us-Sanadid*, yet he tries to build up an entire image of Sir Syed as a historian and as an archaeologist. He begins with describing the Historical texts edited by Sir Syed to provide correct historical accounts free from errors common in Persian works. After mentioning these texts Nazir Ahmad goes on to describe the original works

follows:

- A review in Urdu by Nawab Muhammad Ziauddin Khan
- Introduction by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in Urdu containing 78 Persian Verses
- Chapter 1 containing details of buildings and other structures outside the city, 123 in number
- Chapter 2, dealing with the description of 32 buildings in the premises of the Red Fort
- Chapter 3, giving the description of 70 buildings, doors, windows etc. within the



LAL MAHAL

A Sketch from Sir Syed's *Asar-us-Sanadeed*

undertaken by Sir Syed namely, *Jam-i-Jam*, *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* and *Athar-us-Sanadid*. The author highlights that Sir Syed's interest in archaeology and the history of Delhi was aroused by Sir Charles Metcalf and Sir Thomas Metcalf, the former induced Mirza Sangin Beg to compose *Sairul Manazil* in 1827, which is a text considered to be a true precursor of the *Athar-us-Sanadid*. The *Asar-us-Sanadid* was printed by Sir Syed in his own Press in 1847 under the supervision of Syed Abdul Ghafur Baqa. The contents of *Asar-us-Sanadid* are as

- four walls of Shahjahanabad
- Chapter 4, dealing with the climate, language, and lives of 129 Shaikhs, Majzubs, Rasulshahis, Qaris, Hafiz, poets, calligraphers and musicians.
- The text is followed by three reviews, one by Ghalib, the other by Sahbai and the third by Sadr-ud-Din Khan, all in Persian.

The text *Asar-us-Sanadid* gives a lot of information about the buildings, their

*First published in *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Centenary Tribute*, Ed. Asloob A. Ansari, Adam Publishers, Delhi, 2001, p.128-153

history, their builders, the inscriptions etc. Sir Syed had personally visited all these sites and had sketches prepared by two well-known painters, Faiz Ali Khan and Mirza Shah Rukh Beg.

The paper then goes on to give a detailed account of the contents of the first edition of the book:

1. A description of a fort constructed by Ghiyathuddin Bulban by the name of Ghiyathpur or Marzaghan (meaning Hell) is given. The emphasis on the meaning and reasoning behind calling a resting adobe of an emperor hell occupies the imagination of the author of the paper and it is understood that the term Marghazan has been used by people for graveyards as well.

2. Raushan Ara Bagh is the next structure to be discussed in the paper and its description is given according to the one mentioned in *Asar-us-Sanadid*. A poet named Abul Khair who spent his life during the days of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb is also mentioned as a source on Raushan Ara Bagh. The poet in his *Diwan* has two chronograms on the construction of Raushan Ara Bagh, who is mentioned as Raushan Rai. For the purposes of the paper the importance of the manuscript lies in the fact that its chronogram for the construction of the Bagh of the Princess was finished during the reign of Aurangzeb and not that of Shah Jahan and the date given in the second edition of the *Athar-us-Sanadid* as 1064 AH is incorrect, it was constructed about 11 or 12 years after this date.

3. The Reuse of the Architectural Calligraphy from *Akbarabadi* Mosque at Delhi in the A.M.U. Aligarh Mosque is the next issue taken up by Nazir Ahmad in his paper. The mosque was completed in 1915 during the stewardship of Nawab Muhammad Ishaq Khan, seventeen years after the death of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. But the above stated inscription is much older and the slabs containing the inscription were brought from Delhi where perhaps they were fixed at the doorway of the *Akbarabadi* Mahal mosque. This latter mosque was built by Shah Jahan's wife *Akbarabadi* Mahal, in 1650 and was demolished post-Mutiny. It is recorded in *Amal-i-Salih* and *Sair-ul-Manazil* that the *Sura al-Fajr* was inscribed on the gateway in three panels. This fact along with the information that no other mosque in Delhi is stated to have the inscription containing *Sura-i-Fajr* in its panel leads one to believe that it is the same inscriptions utilized in the Mosque at Aligarh. There however are issues regarding the time and means by which these panels were obtained

by the MAO Authorities. According to the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee of the *Madrasatul Ulum* published in the Institute Gazette, June 1886, the three panels were presented to Sir Syed by Mirza Sulaiman Jah Bahadur as early as 1886. But despite this evidence, the Employment Officer during the 1960s, Mr. Bhatnagar, has given an altogether different account of the event in his book, *History of M.A.O College*, Aligarh and in several articles. He writes that in 1895 someone informed Sir Syed that stone pieces with a Quranic Surah had been brought to the Aligarh market for sale, Sir Syed rushed there and to his surprise these were a real find of great historical value. He discovered that these were a grant of Shahzada Mirza Sulaiman Jah to his courtiers and they once adorned the tomb of the courtier's son. Sir Syed settled the bargain for a sum of Rs. 102/-. A subscription list was opened and all the visitors that day were charged at the rate of Rs. 2/- each, this gave him rupees 44 only. Dr. Rahim Khan of Lahore came to see him and paid the rest of it. And thus the precious treasure became the property of University.

While these are two different accounts of the same event yet there are certain discrepancies regarding the second version, as the University inscription is not signed by the calligraphist but Sir Syed Ahmad calls him Yaqut Rawam Khan and Mr. Bhatnagar while supporting Sir Syed's argument says that this calligraphist was the same person who inscribed on the Taj Mahal, but this confuses the situation because it is already popularly known that the chief calligraphist of Taj was Amanat Khan Shirazi whose is the only signature available at the Taj. This issue is left unresolved in the paper by Nazir Ahmad since there is not enough evidence to come to truthful conclusions.

4. Further the issue of Language and Style of *Athar-us-Sanadid* adopted by Sir Syed is discussed. It is stated that the subject of the work of Sir Syed i.e. description of buildings and archaeological constructions was not consistent with florid style of writing. Despite this the major part of his book, the introduction and the last chapter on the scholars and learned men of the city, were written by Imam Bakhsh Sahbai, a master of florid Urdu prose. The rest of the book, however is in a simple and straightforward style.

The last part of the paper deals with the concern of the need of a second edition for the *Athar-us-Sanadid*. The first edition of the book was published in 1846 and was much appreciated in India and abroad. It was a suggestion that before the

translation of the work into English it should be thoroughly revised and this work was finished in 1852. To this edition Sir Syed added a Preface in English in which he gives reasons on why the work had a second edition. He writes that the first edition of his work was taken by Mr. A.A Roberts to England and presented to the Royal Asiatic Society and it met the approbation of its members and Colonel Saxon, a member of the Court of Directors asked Mr. Roberts to translate the work into English and thus it became necessary to render the work with certain additions and necessary corrections.

The second edition contained:

- The first chapter was a new one altogether and it refers to a brief history of the first population of all India and particulars in respect of the Capital during the old and new reigns.
- The second chapter of the second edition contains a full account of the Fort built by Shah Jahan as well as of the fortresses erected ever since the City of Delhi was first populated.
- What the 1st and the 3rd Chapter of the first edition contained are to be found in the 3rd chapter of the new edition together with additional particulars in respect of the Old Buildings.
- The 1st Edition had two faults: one was that the particulars respecting some of the old buildings were not then satisfactorily ascertained and secondly some errors were there in their description and the necessary corrections have been made in the 2nd Edition
- In the 2nd Edition the description of the buildings have been particularized
- On the margins of the Second Edition the actual historical books are quoted
 - The second edition also contains the inscriptions found on the buildings and they are copied and inserted in the new Edition in their very original form.

An article by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

On the bricks Employed in Building in Different Ages in India*

Read at a meeting of the Archaeological Society on the 7th October, 1852

It is well known that the towns of Liliput, Inderput, Baghput, Sonapat and Panipat are very old, and it is likewise well known that the war described in Mahabharatha between Judhishtira and Jurgodhun was for the possession of these places. Concerning these towns I have resolved to make investigation and to produce, besides what is written in history, whatever other accurate proofs can be provided. I have already obtained what I consider one proof, and if the Society approves, my enquiries shall be conducted in conformity therewith.

It is clear that every age has its peculiar customs and ways of proceeding, and that afterwards these customs were changed, and different ones introduced. This is plain from the change that is continually going in letters and languages, in architecture and in dress.

From this I concluded that the formation of bricks would be different at different times; just as the brick made in the time of the Hindu Rajas, and which are now dug up in the neighbourhood of Liliput, Arengpoor and Luckerpoor are one of a kind and those of the time of the Pathans which are found near Kotub Sahib are of another. Likewise, those of the time of Akbar, of Shahjehan, of Mohammad Shah, and of the present period are different from the preceding and from one another. From this it appears to me plain that whatever changes take place in other things from one age to another, similar changes take place in bricks; and as old bricks are found at many places, I came to the conclusion that the ages of these places could be discovered therefrom.

It admits of no doubt that the town of Hastinapoor, in the *zilla* of Saharanpoor, which is situated on the banks of the old Ganges, and where there is a Buddhist temple, was the capital of the Pandus. Those bricks which are dug out of the old buildings are without doubt of the Pandu age. And from whatever the bricks of the same description are dug out, it can scarcely admit of a doubt that these places were inhabited at the time of the Pandus. For carrying on this investigation I have obtained bricks from Hastinapoor.

The way in which the bricks were obtained was this. I sent one of my own confidential servants; and having dug up five to six yards of earth round the ruins of Hastinapoor, found manifest forms of bricks; but when they were touched, they felt like sand. And those, which were in somewhat better state of preservation, broke into many pieces when it was attempted to raise them up. In this condition more than 200 bricks were found; and out that he selected two which appeared to be in a better state of preservation. Having lifted them up with great care, he allowed them two days to dry in the wind, at the expiration of which time they became perfectly hard. They were each 20 inches long, 10 broad and 2 1/2 thick. The weight of one is 14 seers, and that of the other 13. The place in which these bricks were found, is not Hastinapoor which was inhabited by Judishtra, since that Hastinapoor was on the bank of the Ganges. In the time of Raja Nimee, otherwise known by the name of Dushtram, the eighth Raja from Judhishtira, Hastinapoor was overflowed by the Ganges, and the capital was removed to the Deccan, and to the bank of the small river Koshikee, whence it was afterwards transferred to Inderput. So I concluded, that when the town of Hastinapoor was built the second time, it was built in the spot where now the bricks are found.

Raja Nimee live 950 years after Judishtra, 736 after the flood, according to the chronology of the Septuagini, and 2607 years before the birth of Christ. Therefore since his time 4468 years have elapsed. It is therefore apparent that the town of Hastinapoor might have been built some time after that. Some may hesitate to adopt my dates. But of their accuracy there can be no doubt, as I have given full proof in my work called *Silsilat-ul-Mulook*. It is unnecessary to quote it here.

To conclude, it is highly probable, that wherever the bricks of the same kind are found, these places are of the same age; and, if this opinion be correct, such bricks should be sought for at Liliput, Baghput, Paniput, Soniput, etc.

*First published in the *Journal of Archaeological Society Delhi*, 1853, pp. 49-51

Abstract from *The Discovery of India*

Jawaharlal Nehru's views on Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

As the people recovered slowly from the horror of the Mutiny days, there was a blank in their minds, a vacuum which sought for something to fill it. Of necessity, British rule had to be accepted, but the break with the past had brought something more than a new government; it had brought doubt and confusion and a loss of faith in themselves. That break indeed had come long before the Mutiny, and had led to the many movements of thought in Bengal and elsewhere to which I have already referred. But the Moslems generally had then retired in to their shells far more than the Hindus, avoided western education, and lived in daydreams of a restoration of the old order. There could be no more dreaming now, but there had to be something to which they could cling on. They still kept away from the new education.

Gradually and after much debate and difficulty, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan turned their minds towards English education and started the Aligarh College. That was the only avenue leading to government service, and the lure of that service proved powerful enough to overcome old resentments and prejudices. The fact that Hindus had gone far ahead in education and service was disliked, and proved a powerful argument to do likewise. Parsees and Hindus were also going ahead in industry, but Moslem attention was directed to government service alone.

But even this new direction to their activities, which was really confined to comparatively few, did not resolve the doubt and confusion of their minds. Hindus, in like straits, had looked back and sought consolation in ancient times. Old philosophy and literature, art and history, had brought some comfort. Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda, Vivekananda, and others had started new movements of thought. While they drank from the rich streams of English literature their minds were also full of ancient sages and heroes of India, their thoughts and deeds, and of the myths and traditions which they had imbibed from their childhood.

Much of this was common to the Moslem masses, who were well acquainted with these traditions. But it began to be felt, especially by the Moslem upper classes, that it was not quite proper for them to associate themselves with these semi-religious traditions, that any encouragement of them would be against the spirit of Islam. They searched for their national roots elsewhere. To some extent they found them in the Afghan and Mughal periods of India, but this was not quite enough to fill the vacuum. Those periods were common for Hindus and Moslems alike, and the sense of foreign intrusion had disappeared from Hindu minds. The Mughal rulers were looked up on as Indian national rulers, though in the case of Aurungzeb there was a difference of opinion. It is significant that Akbar, whom the Hindus especially admired, has not been approved of in recent years by some Moslems. Last year the 400th anniversary of his birth was celebrated in India. All classes of people, including Many Moslems, joined, but the Moslem League kept aloof because Akbar was a symbol of India's unity. This search for cultural roots led Indian Moslems (that is, Some of them of the middle class) to Islamic history, and to the Periods when Islam was a conquering and creative force in Baghdad, Spain, Constantinople, central Asia, and elsewhere.

There had always been interest in this history and some contacts with neighbouring Islamic countries. There was also the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, which brought Moslems from various countries together. But all such contacts were limited and superficial and did not really affect the general outlook of Indian Moslems, which was confined to India. The Afghan kings of Delhi, especially Muhammad Tughlaq, had acknowledged the Khalifa (Caliph) at Cairo. The Ottoman emperors at Constantinople subsequently became the Khalifas, but they were not recognized as such in India. The Mughal Emperors in India recognized no Khalifa or spiritual superiors outside India. It was only after the complete collapse of the Mughal power early in the nineteenth century that the name of the Turkish Sultan began to be mentioned in Indian mosques. This practice was confirmed after the Mutiny. Thus Indian Moslems sought to derive some psychological Satisfaction from a contemplation of Islam's past greatness, Chiefly in other countries, and in the fact of the continuance Of Turkey as an independent Moslem power, practically the only One left. This feeling was not opposed to or in conflict with Indian nationalism; indeed, many Hindus admired and were well acquainted with Islamic history. They sympathized with Turkey because they considered the Turks as Asiatic victims of European



Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq was started by Sir Syed as an instrument of reform

aggression. Yet the emphasis was different, and in their case that feeling did not supply a psychological need as it did in the case of the Moslems. After the Mutiny the Indian Moslems had hesitated which way to turn. The British Government had deliberately repressed them to an even greater degree than it had repressed the Hindus, and this repression had especially affected those sections of the Moslems from which the new middle class, the bourgeoisie, might have been drawn. They felt down and out and were intensely anti-British as well as conservative. British policy towards them underwent a gradual change in the seventies and became more favorable. This change was essentially due to the policy of balance and counterpoise which the British Government had consistently pursued. Still, in this process, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan played an important part. He was convinced that he could only raise the Moslems through co-operation with the British authorities. He was anxious to make them accept English education and thus to draw them out of their conservative shells. He had been much impressed by what he had seen of European civilization, and, indeed



Standing R to L : chaubdar, Syed Zain uddin, Maulana Shibli,
Mustafa Khan of Khurja, Syed Ahmad Ali, Nawab Nazir Jang, peon
Sitting : Maulvi Iqbal Ali (judge), Zain ul Abidin, Qazi Raza Hasan (Patna),
Sir Syed, Mohsin ul Mulk, Syed Imtiaz Ali.
Ground : son of Nawab Nazir Jang.

some of his letters from Europe indicate that he was so dazed that he had rather lost his balance.

Sir Syed was an ardent reformer and he wanted to reconcile Modern scientific thought with Islam. This was to be done, of course, not by attacking any basic belief, but by a rationalistic interpretation of scripture. He pointed out the basic similarities between Islam and Christianity. He attacked *pardah* (the seclusion of women) among the Moslems. He was opposed to any allegiance to the Turkish Khalifat. Above all, he was anxious to push a new type of education. The beginnings of the national movement frightened him, for he thought that any opposition to the British authorities would deprive him of their help in His educational programme. That help appeared to him to be essential, and so he tried to tone down anti-British sentiments among the Moslems and tried to turn them away from the National Congress which was taking shape then. One of the declared Objects of the Aligarh College he founded was 'to make the Mussulmans of India worthy and useful subjects of the British crown.'

He was not opposed to the National Congress because he considered it predominantly a Hindu organization; he opposed it because he thought it was politically too aggressive (though it was mild enough in those days), and he wanted British help and co-operation. He tried to show that Moslems as a whole had not rebelled during the Mutiny and that many had remained loyal to the British power. He was in no way anti-Hindu or communally separatist. Repeatedly he emphasized that religious differences Should have no political or national significance.' Do you not inhabit the same land?' he said. 'Remember that the words Hindu and Mohammedan are only meant for religious distinction; Otherwise all persons, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, even the Christians who reside i n this country, are all in this particular respect belonging to one and the same nation.' Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's influence was confined to certain Sections of the upper classes among the Moslems; he did not touch the urban or rural masses. These masses were almost completely cut off from their upper classes and were far nearer to the Hindu masses. While some among the Moslem upper classes were descendants of the ruling groups during Mughal times, the masses had no such background or tradition. Most of them had been converted from the lowest strata of Hindu society and were most unhappily situated, being among the poorest and the most exploited.

Sir Syed had a number of able and not able colleagues. In his rationalistic approach he was supported, among others, by Syed Chirag Ali and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. His educational activities attracted Munshi Karamat Ali, Munshi Zakaullah of Delhi, Dr. Nazir Ahmad, Maulana Shibli Nomani, and the poet Hali, who is one of the outstanding figures of Urdu literature. Sir Syed succeeded in so far as the beginnings of English education among the Moslems were concerned, and in diverting the Moslem mind from the political movement. A Mohammedan educational conference was started and this attracted the rising Moslem middle class in the professions and services. Nonetheless many prominent Moslems joined the National Congress. British policy became definitely pro-Moslem, or rather in favour of those elements among the Moslems who were opposed to the national movement. But early in the twentieth century the tendency towards nationalism and political activity became more noticeable among the younger generation of Moslems. To divert this and provide a safe channel for it, the Moslem League was started in 1906 under the inspiration of the British Government and the leadership of one of its chief supporters, the Aga Khan. The League had two principal objects: loyalty to the British Government and the safeguarding of Moslem interests. It is worth noting that during the post-Mutiny period all the leading men among Indian Moslems, including Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, were products of the old traditional education, although some of them added knowledge of English later and were influenced by new ideas.

Review

Understanding the Muslim Mind by Rajmohan Gandhi, 1986

-S. Zainab Naqvi

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'Understanding the Muslim Mind' by Rajmohan Gandhi is an assemblage of biographical sketches of 8 Muslims of pre-eminence during the 20th century, one among them is Sayyid Ahmed Khan. The work is laudable and in fact of significance, even today owing to the current debate developing around the idea of religious identity around educational institutions. Rajmohan Gandhi's work is a conscious realization of the deep angst that the Muslim elite were subjected to, in defining their relations with the British Raj and progress in terms of education and politics.

While Sayyid Ahmed Khan was someone greatly misapprehended and appropriated by those who venerate him or degrade him, alike. Rajmohan Gandhi's work is a step towards seeing this man 'as he was' and not what 'he was made look like'. 'He is hailed, and assailed' - writes Gandhi. The account starts with such compelling words that anyone but interested in understanding Sayyid would Indubitably feel that both the reader and the protagonist are in safe hands. The author could not have come more unbiased and clean. The sketch begins with Sayyid's familial background, his proximity to the Mughals and later his correspondence with the Raj after his trip to Britain. Gandhi also has attempted to establish the complexities of his apparent loyalty to the imperial rule for his Qaum's progress.

An impressive feature of this account is Rajmohan Gandhi's true depiction of Sayyid's gradually shaping idiocy and in turn letting the reader comprehend the man in complete light. Honest depiction of the crystallization of Sayyid's view on the primacy of English education, the establishment of Muhammedan Anglo Oriental College and the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity in the process of acquiring knowledge. The account refers to Hafeez Malik's critique of Sayyid as 'father of Muslim Separatism' and refutes this claim without a hint of apologism through the incident of Sayyid's mount as a Hindustani first and not a Muslim in terms of education.

Molana Altaf Hussein Hali's appreciative reference to Sayyid Ahmed in his Musaddas renders all communal allegations made on Sayyid baseless. The abuses of enemies (read : orthodox sections) as 'infidel!' 'Satan!' etc went in vain, Sayyid was not slowed by such threats on his life, he writes. The author refers to the possible influence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy on Sayyid.

"I have frequently said that India is a beautiful bride and Hindus and Muslims are her two eyes... If one is lost, the beautiful bride will become ugly..." - the efforts made in the last twenty years of discerning an idea of a 'latent' Pakistan in Sayyid's vision have been denounced by the author by quoting Sayyid's speech verbatim.

Rajmohan Gandhi has deliberately stated the facts and anecdotes in true light. Amid clarifying a host of misconceptions that an aloof would hold of Sir Sayyid's idea of reform, education, issues relating to Muslim identity in the political scenario back then, his divorce with the Indian National Congress etc, the larger picture is left to the psyche of the reader to deduce what he/she would imbibe of the visionary, as an honest biographer must do.

Its a given fact that all aspects of understanding someone as complex as Sayyid himself and to paint him in full light is impractical to a extent from a short biography. Yet, Rajmohan Gandhi's work is an essential reading and in fact a much needed one in terms of the perspective that is devoid of any prejudice based on communal or religious distinction.

A Glimpse of Celebrations of Bicentenary Birth Anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

On the occasion of the bicentenary birth anniversary of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founding father of Aligarh Muslim university, the Center of Advanced Study Department of History organized various events commemorating the memory of our founding father.

An exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials from 14th October to 17th October 2017 was organized. The timings of the exhibition coincided with the bicentennial celebration of

Sir Syed Ahmad Khans birth anniversary and the Alumni Meet organized by the University, the exhibition was attended by a large number of the old students of the University.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Professor Irfan Habib, the celebrated historian and the doyen of Indian history. Before formally inaugurating the exhibition he addressed the students and stressed the importance of such events in the general development of knowledge and understanding and scholars can enhance their research with the physical remain of the past. Speaking on the importance of documents and the difficulty that a historian faces in procuring such documents, Professor Habib told the audience how to differentiate the original from the fake documents like e.g. Mughal Farmans could be easily identified as original if the first two line of the Farmans were half and half and if this was not the case then the Farmans were fake.

The display in the exhibition was organized in a number of thematic sections and sub-sections. Thus we had the archeological artefacts and the material relics from the past,

manuscripts and the documents from the 17th and 18th centuries, copies of photographs of various structures of the MAO College and the documents related to it, modern books and articles written on the Sir Syed and the works written by Sir Syed himself.

Sir Syed had himself had been a great collector of relics of the past and had built a great collection of ancient Jain, Buddhist and Hindu sculptures which since the days of MAO College had been kept and maintained by



Sketch of Sir Syed, published in an Urdu Magazine, *Awadh Punch*, 1881.

the archeology section of the Department of History. Prof R.C. Gaur, the former chairman of the department had compiled a catalogue of this archeological collection of Sir Syed.

The exhibition displayed specimen archeological finds from important excavations conducted by the Department of History. Representative sites from which material was displayed included Atranjikhhera and Jakhera, both the sites situated near Aligarh. Atranjikhhera was excavated by prof R.C. Gaur and the first part of his report has been published. The processing of the finds of medieval layers at Atranjikhhera is still going on. Jakhera was excavated by Prof M.D.N. Sahi and its report is yet to be published. The findings from Atranjikhhera has proved the date of presence of Iron and firmly establish its affinity to the PGW culture. The material on display included the copper and iron object, tools and weapons, terracotta votive figurines, discs and different kinds of pottery sherds. Some bricks of Kushana and Gupta period were also on the display. The exhibition showcased two terracotta stamps which were used in prehistoric times to make designs on the walls of huts. Then there were pieces of gold ornaments as well as gold foils and thin wires of gold from excavation of Atranjikhhera. Some rare silver and copper coins of medieval period were also on display.

Amongst the original documents and manuscripts on display were some early Farmans of Akbar, a document issued under the sign of Munim Khan, as well as the very rare manuscript of Tazkira-i-Pir Hassu Taili authored by Surat Singh. This work was written during the reign of Shahjahan and is the only copy available today anywhere in the world. It is a versified biography of Pir Hassu, a saint of Lahore who belonged to the community of oil-pressers.

The section on modern books was divided, into two parts- books written about Sir Syed and the books written by Sir Syed. There were also number of photographs of important letters and documents regarding the establishment of MAO College as well as the photographs of the old structures and some important epigraphs carved on them. One of the most interesting photograph at display was the caricature of Sir Syed titled "*Natury Yogi*" in Oudh Punch Akhbar. It was reproduced in David Lelyveld's Aligarh's First Generation.

Apart from the exhibition, CAS Department of History also organized a lecture series. On 14th October 2017 the first lecture was delivered by Miss Lubna Irfan who is a research scholar at CAS, Department of History, on the topic "Identifying the Historian in Sir Syed". Then on 15th October 2017, Professor Yasmin Saikai who is Professor of History in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, University of Arizona delivered a talk on the topic, "Research Journeys: History Leading Forward." In this lecture she shared her journey with the audience in the field of History starting from this very department till becoming a Professor of History in one of the America's top Universities. The last lecture was delivered on 16th October 2017 by Professor Mohammad Sajjad who is a Professor of Modern Indian History at CAS, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University on the topic "Sir Syed: Negotiating with Colonialism". Also on 16th October 2017 a formal Condolence Meeting was held in the Department to mourn the sad demise of Professor Satish Chandra who passed away on 14th October 2017.

In the coming November 21-22, 2017 CAS, department of History along with Sir Syed Academy will be organizing a National Seminar on the theme of 'Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: His Vision and Legacy'. And in the last week of January 2018 CAS, Department of History will be holding an International Seminar which will be attended by eminent scholars like David Lelyveld and Jamal Malik.

Exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials

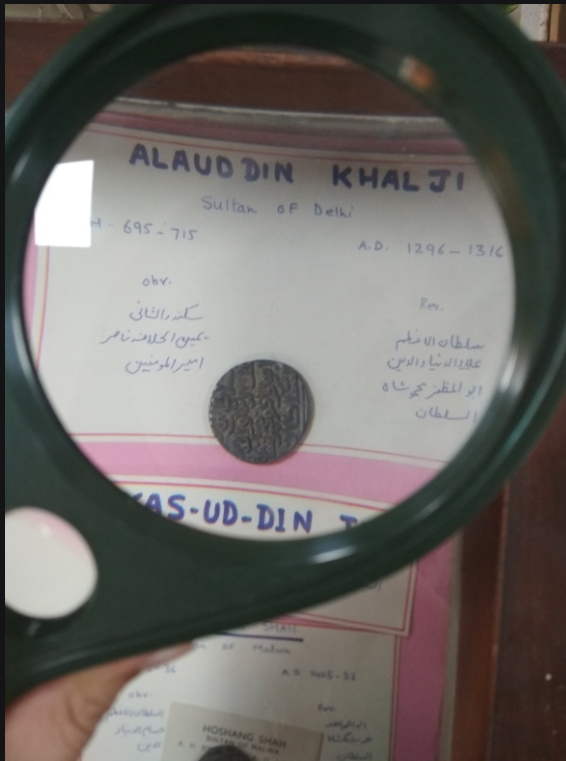


**Gold Foils obtained from the site at Atranjikhhera
by the Centre of Advanced Study, Department of History, AMU.**

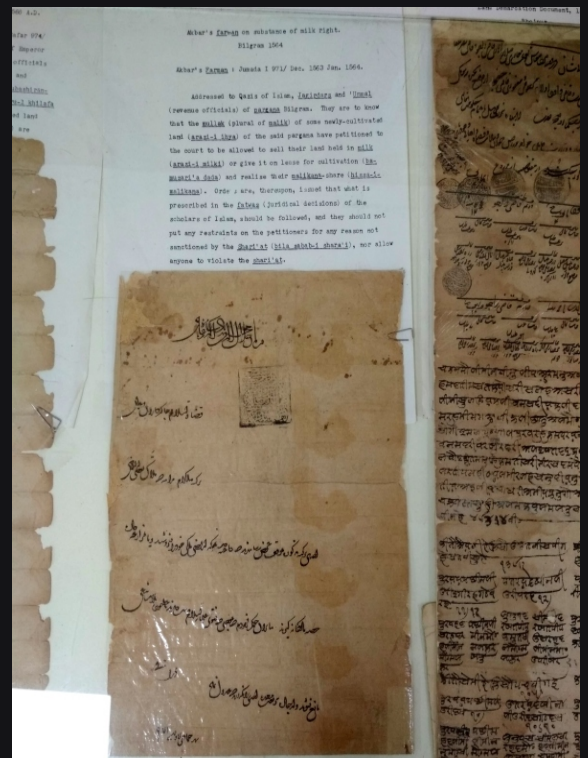


Terracotta Stamps from Atranjikhhera

Exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials

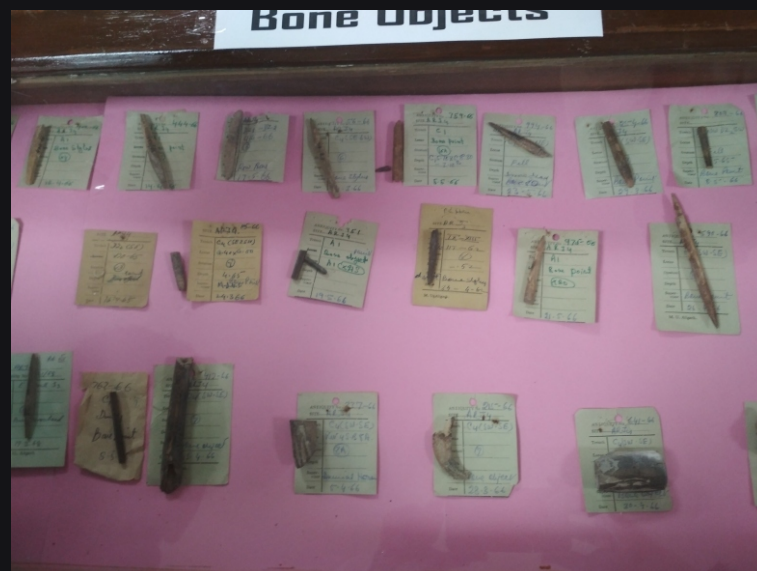


Allauddin Khalji's Coin

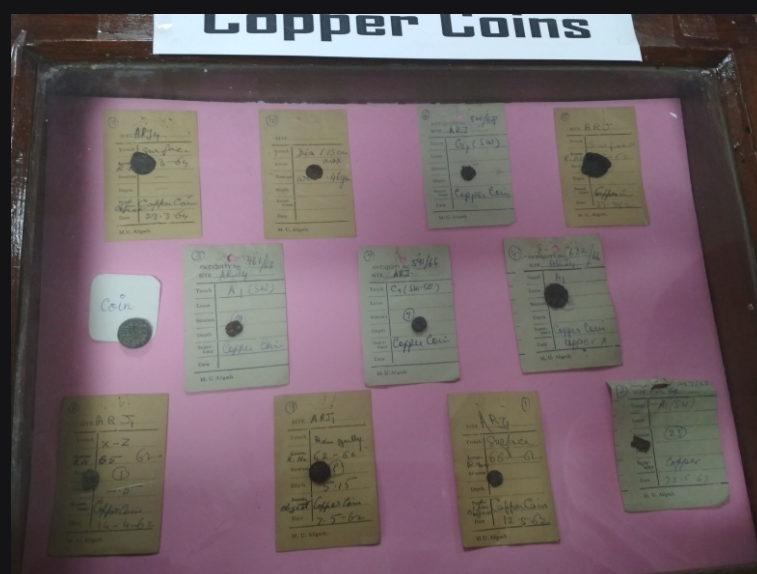


Akbar's Farman

Exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials

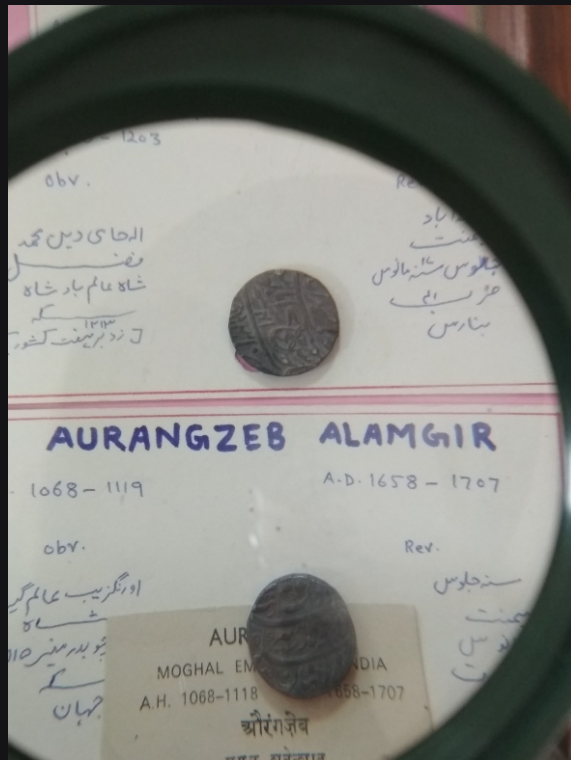


Collection of copper coins, on display in the exhibition

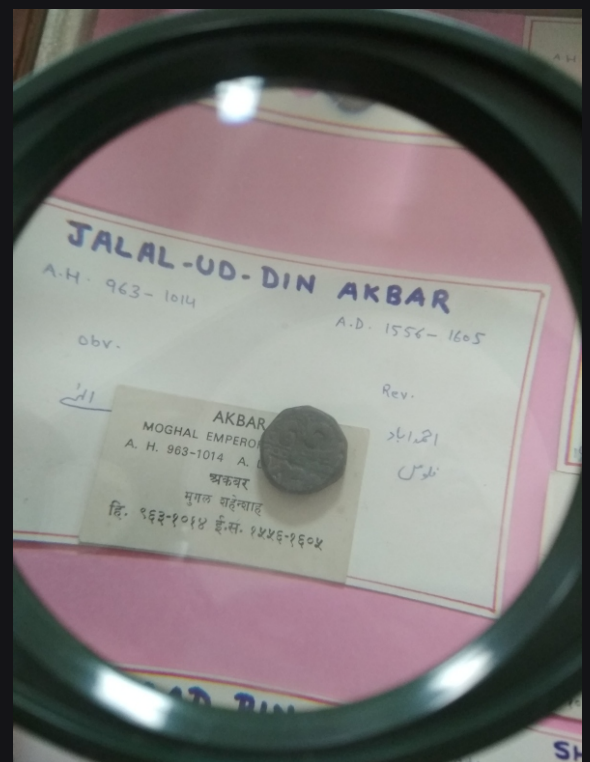


Several bone objects, on display at the exhibition

Exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials

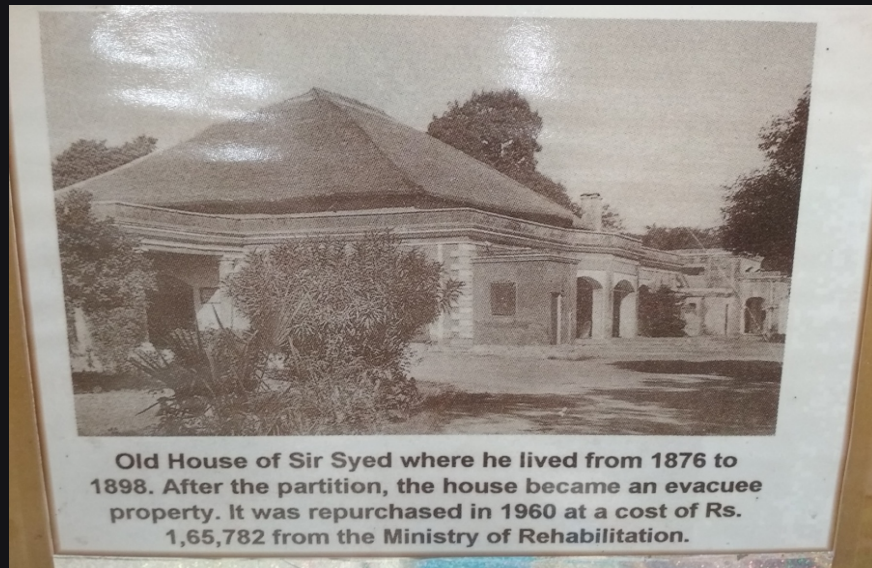


A coin from Aurangzeb's reign



Akbar's coin

Exhibition of Manuscripts, Documents, Coins and Archeological Materials



An image of Sir Syed's old house which he occupied at Aligarh from 1876-1898



A photograph of Sir Syed with his son Syed Mahmood and grand son Syed Ross Masood

Obituary: Prof. Satish Chandra



The members of the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, join the very large number of Professor Satish Chandra's friends, pupils, readers and admirers in mourning his passing away.

Professor Satish Chandra was born in 1922 and was educated at the Allahabad University. He was appointed Reader in the Aligarh Muslim University, and served in that capacity till 1964. During this period his book *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-40*, was published by the Aligarh Muslim University in 1959 under this Department's publication programme. He also served the University as Proctor and Provost (Non-Residents' Hall). In 1964 he took an appointment at the Rajasthan University (Jaipur) and then the Delhi University whereafter he joined the Jawaharlal Nehru University as Professor. Subsequently he became Vice-Chairman and then Chairman, University Grants Commission (1976-81). In these capacities, he gave much assistance and advice to this Department and was instrumental in instituting a highly successful programme of annual Regional Workshops in Medieval Indian History, a 15 years long project under the CAS programme.

Professor Satish Chandra served as Secretary, Indian History Congress (1971-73) and presided over its 1977 session at Chandigarh. He was awarded many academic honours abroad.

He published a large number of works containing many research and interpretative works besides the work of *Parties and Politics at Mughal Court* above mentioned. His book on *Medieval India* is not only a text book of a high order, but also a major interpretation of the period. He insisted on a non-partisan secular approach to History and his books and numerous papers bear of testimony to his own unbiased outlook. He was a pioneer in the study of Rajasthani historical documents and practically created a special field of Indian Ocean studies, for the pursuit of which he established a centre. He was also the general editor of the *Comprehensive History of India*, sponsored by the Indian History Congress, several volumes of which have been published under his close superintendence.

The Indian academic world, especially the community of historians has suffered a grievous loss on his passing away.

Member of this Department also remember his late gracious wife Professor Savitri Chandra, herself a notable historian of Hindi Literature.

It is resolved that the sentiments of members of this Department and their most sincere condolences be conveyed to members of Professor Satish Chandra's family.

